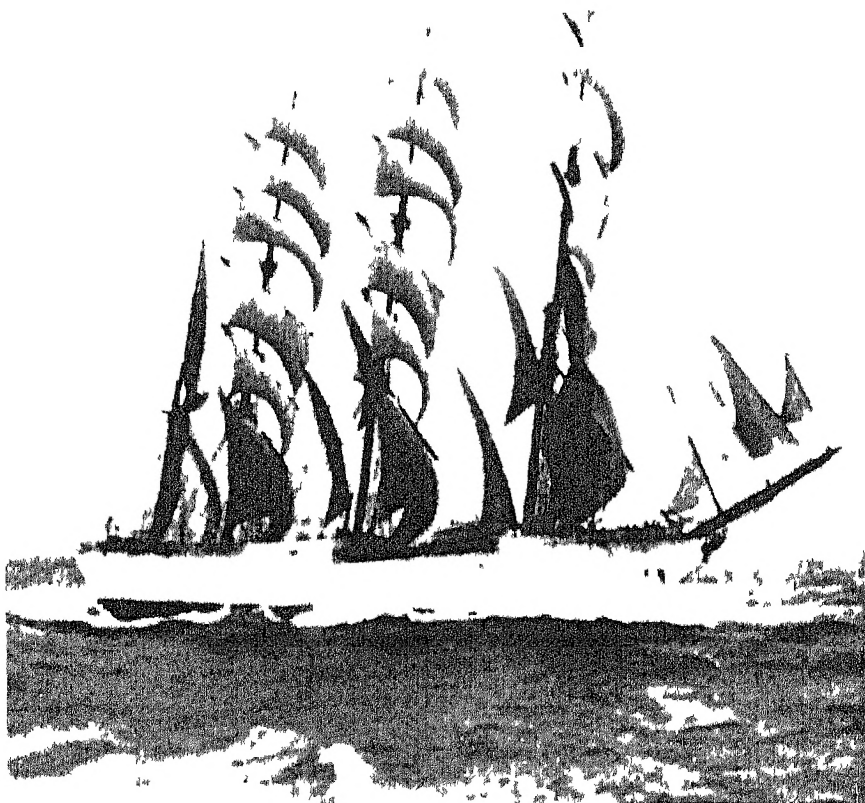


THE DUCHESS



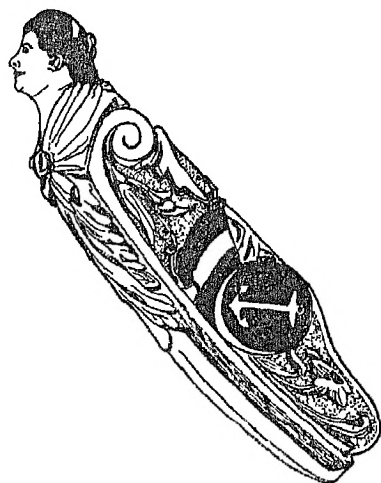
1 *Heisogin Cecile* off Cape Horn under royals, taken from *Olivebank*

THE DUCHESS

The Life and Death of the
Herzogin Cecilie

by

PAMELA ERIKSSON



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A ship! My ship! She was mine, more absolutely mine for possession and care than anything in the world; an object of responsibility and devotion. She was there, waiting for me, spell-bound, unable to move, to live, to get out into the world (till I came), like an enchanted princess. Her call had come to me as if from the clouds. I had never suspected her existence. I didn't know how she looked. I had barely heard her name, and yet we were indissolubly united for a certain portion of our future, to sink or swim together!

A sudden passion of anxious impatience rushed through my veins and gave me such a sense of the intensity of existence as I have never felt before or since. I discovered how much of a seaman I was, in heart, in mind, and, as it were, physically—a man exclusively of sea and ships, the sea the only world that counted, and the ships the test of manliness, of temperament, of courage and fidelity—and of love.

I had an exquisite moment. It was unique also.

Joseph Conrad: The Shadow-Line

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My memory of all the facts in this book has been checked as far as possible. If they differ from other authorities in print I shall take refuge in the horse's mouth and neigh loudly. For documents, log extracts, and good advice I have to thank Herr Edgar Erikson of Mariehamn, Gustaf Erikson's son; Sjökapten Gunnar Boman, of grain fleet fame, now curator of Ålands Nautical Museum; my brother-in-law Sjökapten Linus Lindvall of Lemland; and *Förste*, now Mr. Elis Karlson, of Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia; also Sjökapten Nisse Erikson.

Mr. W. L. A. Derby and his publisher Jonathan Cape have given permission for several extracts to be included from that other monument of love to the Duchess, *The Tall Ships Pass*. Wing-Commander Blackwood has given me permission to use parts of "Paik, the Story of a true Sea Dog", which I wrote for *Blackwood's Magazine*. *Punch* has allowed me to quote Hilton Brown's poem on *Herzogin Cecilie* in full, and the firm of Geoffrey Bles has permitted me to use the little saga about painting the Duchess from my own book, *Out of the World*.

Those who have helped in the widespread hunt for *Herzogin Cecilie's* last log book, hitherto unsuccessful, are too numerous to name. In it was recorded every nautical detail of those few fateful hours after she sailed from St. Anthony's Head till she struck the Ham Stone. I should like to have quoted it in full, if only to give those who were wise after the event a headache. As second best I have quoted what Mr. Derby has written about this in *The Tall Ships*, though he tells me he never saw the log himself, but culled his information from various sources, which he cannot now remember. However, that log book should be in the Åland Nautical

Museum, and I now make one last appeal to whoever has it to send it there.

Last but far from least I must thank Eric Newby, the enjoyment of whose book, *The Last Grain Race*, inspired me to try to tell him about the other side of the moon.

PRONUNCIATION

BECAUSE the flavour of this book is Swedish—Åland Swedish—not English—it would be best to read the names in that soft lilt which gives to the Åland accent the same fascination as the Scots. I here give an indication of the way to pronounce the names, not in official phonetics, but in spelling which any English-speaking person with a standard English accent would use to approximate the pronunciation.

Åland	Awland
Ålänning	Awlenning
Mariehamn	Mah-riay-hahmn
Herzogin Cecilie	Hair-tso-geen (hard g) Sess-eel-ieh
Sven Eriksson	Sv-ehn Eh-rick-sn
Förste	Fur-stay
Styrman	St-eur-mahn
Gusta(f)	Goos-ta(f)
Algot Leman	Ahl-got Lay-mahn
Elis Karlson	Ehl-iss Kahrl-sn
Nisse	Nee-say
Calle	Kahl-lay
Granith	Grahn-eet
Gerhard	Yair-hart
Mikael	Mee-kail
Sjögren	Shurr (as "purr")-grain
Boman	Boh-mahn

Broman	Broh-mahn
Hägerstrand	Heh-gehr-strahnd
Artur Söderlund	Ah-ter Sir-d-loond
Linus Lindvall	Lee-noos Lind-vahl
Mauritz Mattson	Mau (like "cow")-ris Maht-sn
Ruben de Cloux	Ru-ben-de-Klo
Pellas	Pell-ahs
Granboda	Grahn-boh-da
Lemland	Lem-lahnd
Lemlänning	Lem-lenning
Irene	Ee-rain-ee
Jens	Yens
Ida	Ee-dah
Nanni	Nahni
Amelia	Ah-may-lee-a
Lemström	Lem-strerm (like "firm")
Flakka	Flah-kah
Pamir	Pah-meer
Passat	Pahs-saht
Olivebank	Oh-leev-er-bahnk
Moshulu	Mosh-ooloo
Penang	Peh-nahng
L'Avenir	Lah-v-neer
Winterhude	Vin-t-hoo-d
Killoran	Kil-awr-n
Ponape	Poh-nah-pay
Norskog Udd	Norr-skoh-ood
Bokholm	Bock-hohlm
Vinbärs ön	Veen-bairs-ern

Hansas	<u>Hahn</u> -sahs
Callas	<u>Kahl</u> -lahs
Erkas	<u>Air</u> -kahs
Gunnar	<u>Goo</u> -nahr
Kurre	<u>Koo</u> -rhe
Åbo	<u>Awboh</u>
pjäxor	pec- <u>ycck</u> -zor
Uusikaupunki	Oo-si-cow-poonk-i
Nystad	<u>Neu</u> -staht

FOREWORD

SO FAST did Western civilization change in the first quarter of this century that, by the thirties, what had lately been a common sight was all at once bizarre, exceptional, and slightly ludicrous.

But the tide of time, though it rises swiftly on certain coasts, lags, waywardly on others. So it came about that one of the loveliest things man has ever evolved in his struggle for existence, the square-rigged ship, which only achieved its full beauty when already doomed to die, found its last refuge in the remote Baltic archipelago of Åland.

In the late twenties a considerable fleet of big square-riggers, among them some of the tallest ships ever built, were precariously engaged in the Australian wheat trade, appearing in British ports regularly once a year. They were owned, with few exceptions, by a short, trenchant, indomitable sea captain of the ancient Swedish blood of Åland, Gustaf Erikson of Mariehamn.

Square-riggers were memorable not only for their beauty. Though man had created them they had also created a breed of men who had, at their finest, a kind of virtue lacking in others. Even today, when the ships are gone and only a few of their men live on, the hallmark of a man trained in sail leads you to expect some peculiar steadfastness and reliability of character.

These men as a breed died with the dying ships. In England as the 1914 war began they were already scattered, broken and disillusioned, their ranks shattered by the vibration of engines: but in Åland, after that war, the breed was still intact.

The Ålänning who manned the barques as long as Gustaf Erik-

son could squeeze a profit out of them were the last examples left in the world of the true breed of sailors. Most of them were young, vital, devoted to their calling, and only half aware that they and their ships were anachronisms.

Though a great many people of other nations came in contact with the Åland barques and the men in them and even visited Åland itself for love of the ships, I don't think any foreigner but I became so involved in that world and was eventually absorbed into it; for in one of the barques it was my happy fate to find the perfect companion for life, disguised as a master mariner.

We came to know each other well in Australia, in England, and on several oceans. By the time we decided on marriage there was nothing much we did not know about each other as individuals, but neither of us was more than dimly aware of the other's native background.

Mine did not really matter, for I had travelled much and mixed with many different kinds of people and so was something of a chameleon; but Sven's was rigid and traditional. I knew little of it before August 1935 when I joined him in Åland where he was on leave from his ship.

It was a warm, luminous midnight. The Stockholm boat had glided in to Västerhamn among the dim forms of barques lying at anchor, and there Sven had been on the wharf with a taxi in which we sent the luggage. We ourselves had walked up the great linden avenue which joins Mariehamn's two harbours.

In the deep shadow of the trees glow-worm lights beckoned strollers to taste hot dogs and ice-creams on the vendors' trolleys. The air was full of drifts of conversation, gleams of cigarettes, echoes of laughter.

I hugged Sven's arm. He had never even hinted that Mariehamn was pretty, that people there were delightfully social in the middle of the night!

"Oh, Mariehamn thinks itself very modern," he said, "but the real Åland is out in the country. Tomorrow we will go to Lemland and to Pellas."

Part One

1935—BRIDAL WREATH

I

Lemland

IT WAS a curious sensation to sit in Lemland's church and hear one's banns being read—at least that is what Sven said they were, because the old pastor's muffled Swedish was beyond me, used as I was to the ringing orders and oaths on board.

He nudged me again, because I was not paying attention, but was trying to look at a spot a few feet above and behind our heads without twisting mine. Just there, turning majestically in the hot currents of air that rose from the packed congregation, hung a ship, a marvellous, beautiful, faery ship, all sail set, a square-rigger as gallant and lovely as any we knew so well.

The almost soundless whisper insisted in my ear. "You can look at it afterwards, but everyone is wanting to look at you and if you look at the ship they won't be able to resist and then they can't pretend to be listening to the parson."

A naughty impulse made me grin at him. There was an answering gleam in his eye, but the rest of his face was set in solemnity, looking straight ahead. Apparently motionless, he managed to give me such a nip that I too faced forward immediately, for the sting of the spanking he had once given me was still a lively memory.

Sections of various faces were visible; the young ones smooth, fresh and insipid, but on every older countenance the furrows of life's stress lay unconcealed. A kind of patient dignity wrapped the whole congregation like a doldrum calm. I wondered if squalls ever ruffled it.

Forbidden to look at the ship, and finding the Lemlännings in church mood too enigmatic, I lowered my eyes to Sven's hands which rested in a massive Turk's head of a knot on his knees. They looked whiter, more smooth-skinned, more powerful and yet more sensitive than ever. The September sunlight falling on them from one of the plain glass windows sank glowing into the square cornelian of his signet ring. The heavy gold setting glimmered too. It was a very ancient ring. I wondered who of the Pellas men had first worn it in this church. Perhaps he, too, had come here with his affianced. Perhaps she, too—but now the service was over and we were standing outside, an eddy in the human brook which trickled from the porch. While I was murmuring the few polite Swedish words I knew I became acutely aware of how outlandish I was, standing there beside the plain, polished granite tombstones of this twelfth-century church in this seafaring parish of Lemland in the Åland Islands.

The faces which in church had been enigmatic were now shrewd, quizzical and kindly, assessing us frankly, but politely.

"Now, here is Pellas Sven with the *Engelska* and banns and everything read so it is obvious they intend getting married. Of course, as captain of the great *Herzogin Cecilie* he can do as he likes, but why couldn't he be content with one of our own girls? She's certainly big and strong-looking enough, but can she cook and bake and weave and keep a house in our Åland way and if he should come to be Master of Pellas, what about all the outside work with cows and horses and sheep, and driving manure, and does she realize that a deep-sea sailor is away for a year or two years at a stretch and needs a wife who can look after things on her own? They make a fine couple, there's no denying, and they certainly should have strapping children . . . but . . ."

It was a long time since there had been such a phenomenon in Lemland. No one could, in fact, remember any bride more foreign than Erkas Kristine coming to the parish, and she at least talked Swedish, and was from the Swedish shore of the Gulf of Bothnia, though some said there was Lap blood in her.

Occasionally a son of Åland forgot himself so far as to marry a Finn and thus introduce, by the back door, an influence, a language and cast of countenance which the rampantly Swedish Ålänings were determined to keep out. Mostly they returned from the sea and, whatever exotic females they had consorted with in foreign parts, docilely married the lass who had marked them down. So, with the casualness of custom, had Sven.

"But why?" I asked.

It was not an easy question to answer, for it involved the whole structure of Åland society. The hierarchy of sea captains who were the leaders of that society, among whom Sven, both by birth and worth, early found himself, were distinguished by certain insignia, among which figured gold watches and wives. Sven put it that way, half-sadly, half-jokingly. When he acquired the gold watch he automatically acquired the wife. Having lived unlovingly with her for a few months he felt that it would have been wiser to be content with only the gold watch. But then, of course Sven already had another love, the beautiful, the immaculate, the all-absorbing Duchess Cecilie.

There were plenty of people who might have liked to forbid our banns that Sunday. I had a superstitious feeling that the Duchess Cecilie herself might sail in with some objection: but she was lying half asleep, gathering strength for what would be her last and greatest voyage, beside the wharf at Uusikaupunki. It was to her that we should soon be going—the adorable Duchess, to whom I was as deeply enslaved as Sven.

There was little time to investigate that peculiar feeling of familiarity which had seized me at the moment I stepped ashore in Mariehamn and had grown in strength until it had overwhelmed me as I entered Pellas for the first time. Uncanny it was to know the lay-out of the rooms and what I should see in them before ever I was led there or told.

Not that the sense of familiarity stopped me asking questions. The ship hanging in the church was lovely, but why?

"We've always had ships hanging in churches here," said Sven.

"You should see them in the cathedral at Åbo, a whole row sailing up the aisle. Some of them there are falling to bits, they are so old. This Lemland one is quite new. Perhaps my great-great-grandfather made it."

There were ships, too, stiff loving portraits of them, hung round the walls of Pellas. Pellas itself, standing on its dais of bed-rock and turf, was as like Noah's ark as anything this side of Ararat. Sturdy and proud, it stood on the bald, granite crown of the hill which bounded the valley of the village of Granboda, with the sea and the forest at its back, woven of the very fabric of the things by which it was surrounded.

The prosperity which inspired Pellas had been wrested from the sea by men of Granboda, skilful builders of ships and sailors too, able to turn their skill to fashioning an ark from their forest if such was their fancy.

Five years men had worked in Pellas Norrskog, felling the timber for this dream of a sailor's heart. Each winter the sturdy Finnish horses grandfather had loved drove the great logs home over the ice to form the seasoning pile of axed-out, iron-hard pin pine beams, the fourteen-inch wide flooring planks, the slightly lighter ceiling boards, the thousands of feet of lapping boards, and the massive beams for the roof.

At the same time birch was felled for the furniture.

All lay seasoning till everything was in readiness. Charcoal had also to be burnt for the forge where the nails were made. Last of all, the women gathered immense heaps of moss together in the forest and quite a joyous occasion was made of driving it home in wagons in hot, dry weather to be stored for caulking the timbers and filling the space between ceiling and attic floor.

In the seventies Pellas folk had grand modern ideas. Instead of cutting their own shingles they bought flat-iron and roofed their ark with that. The weight was excessive, but beams and joists were massive and able to bear double the strain. The manner of its building was one of the only things I had been told about Pellas before Sven took me there.

That she had come to Pellas as a bride of seventeen was one of the few facts that I knew about Irene Eriksson, Sven's mother, the mistress of Pellas, before I met her. I had brought a present for her, chosen carefully in London, a few yards of Macclesfield silk for a dress—black because I knew she was over seventy, soft and pure because I knew she liked the best, and sprinkled with small scarlet and cream posies because I guessed she liked a bit of colour, too. Had not Sven bought her in Lourenço Marques a magnificent Chinese shawl crusted with embroidery, aflame with gold blossoms? Showing it to me first on some idle trade wind Sunday he had explained that it was a present for "Mamma", next time he should get home. It lay then beside the clothes she used to give him before nearly every voyage. Pellas sheep had grown that wool which she spun and knitted into socks fit for sea boots, and gloves and mittens which he never wore.

"And what," I had asked, "is this?" pulling out a bag-like garment of the thickest striped flannel. It was a night shirt, which mamma had insisted on giving him before she realized that he preferred those new-fangled pyjamas.

Then, hunting for some other curiosity to show me, he had lighted on the Shirt. Had it been the surcoat of the Black Prince I could not have been more delighted with it. It was pine green, with a thin parti-coloured stripe, red and yellow. Something in the crisp sturdy fineness of the wool told me that it was home-woven before Sven said so.

"Try it on," he said, and I capered about in the wonderful garment almost believing that, like the fairy prince, I would turn into a swan.

"Have it," he had decided laughing, "as long as you can stand the itch of that home-woven stuff against your skin."

So the shirt was mine, and finally the shawl too, though I protested before I realized that it was a guerdon of all those things we had left unsaid.

Though she knew nothing about this, the shirt and the shawl lay awkwardly on my conscience while Irene Eriksson summed

me up with a shrewd, courteous, wry, but not unsympathetic look in her old eyes.

Everything about her was old, but without the pathos and dilapidation of age; her back was still straight and supple, and although she was large, she was neither fat nor cumbersome. There was more written in her face than anyone as young as I then was could read, but it was fascinating because of this. The flat but not sagging cheeks, the straight brows, the long curve of the jaw, the curled nostrils of the pronounced nose, the large but now filmy eyes, the finely moulded forehead—those must have all made a remarkably handsome young face, if the lips, now puckered beyond recognition by age, had been the kind of large, firm, flat mouth I imagined.

She was very glad to see Sven and welcomed me in the aura of that gladness: but I felt I was unimportant beside the fact that here again was one of the Pellas men back from the sea, back at home if only for a short while. For several years she had been a widow with only a married and unmarried daughter living under her wing, and now we sat in her drawing-room, while Mery and Ebba, their faces glowing with interest and excitement, arranged the coffee table.

No women I had ever met were quite like these three. They were so unadorned, so unselfconscious, so decorously alive, and so much themselves. It was hard not to be able to exchange more than a few halting words with them, for Sven soon grew tired of translating and with a final "You must quickly learn some Swedish," consigned me to a silent munching of his mother's famous peppercakes.

With what affection those four were talking to each other!

Meanwhile I began to enjoy the drawing-room or *salan*, as they called it. There was nothing in it that could not have been put there fifty years ago. The huge white-tiled stove rose to the roof, the sofa and chairs were early Victorian, as were the lace curtains on the four six-foot-high windows. The wallpaper was figured in a pattern which made me instinctively think of Disraeli.

Several barquentines, flatly painted in oils, sailed round the room in their gilded frames. On the blue painted floor were spread parallel runners of home-woven mats, gaily striped. There was a plush tablecloth that I knew Sven had brought from Chile, and a snowy Merino fleece that he had got in Australia. Crystal and trinkets, some of them so obviously the loving gifts of children, cluttered various birchwood stands and bureaux. Anybody in love with fashionable modernity would have sniggered at it all. I could only feel its inner harmony.

The tide of time had not only advanced slowly in *Pellasalan*. It lagged too over the whole archipelago of Åland as if loath to submerge the brave pattern of life that had been woven there by its indomitable dwellers since primitive times.

The sea was Åland's greatest possession, threading its way in a myriad paths through the low granite isles and islets, on which soil was scarce and mostly immature, so recent, geologically speaking, was their emergence from the Baltic.

From the sea rather than from the land a living had to be wrested, but fish, except among the outer skerries, were not in abundance. The Ålänning who lived on and round about the main masses of land in the centre of the cluster had less fish but much more timber. They must have early learnt to use it to conquer the sea, and they must have been a race with fiery vigour and independence, for in early Viking times they were already known as "the beserk Ålänning".

They had ranged far afield, joining the Scandinavian vikings on the great Eastern trade and pilgrim route which led down the Russian rivers to Kiev and Miklagård. Perhaps they went even farther, for Persian coins of the eighth century have been found in early Åland graves.

Though conditions in the outer world changed, Åland still had nothing but her sea, her timber and the sparse earth from which she could only scrape a meagre home ration. Neither the sea alone, nor the soil alone could sustain a family. It is easy to see how the farmer-seafarer structure of society developed. It is also

easy to see why no feudal lord, no industrial magnate, was ever even tempted to sink his talons into the scraggy flesh of the Island Kingdom—as the Ålänningss themselves called it, though they would have made short work of any king who tried to mount their granite throne. Two of Europe's profoundest influences, Feudalism and Industrialism, passed them by. Their traditions had not been shaken for a thousand years.

In the parish of Lemland in the nineteenth century seafaring genius had come to its fullest flower. They owned dozens of ships, brigantines and schooners, nothing much above five hundred tons, but fine little vessels which could compete in all the North Sea trades and also ventured, the bigger ones, over the Atlantic. Many of these ships were built and manned by Lemlänningss, clubbing together in village groups and parish companies to finance the ventures. All over Åland boys seemed to be sailors and carpenters by instinct, but in Lemland the cream of seafarers lay thick on the population; captains were two a penny and shipowners sixpence coloured.

It was fitting then that a boy who came from one of Lemland's arks should be the first to bring world fame to Åland. Gustaf Erikson, like everyone else, rose from the deck to a master's berth and was already a shipowner by 1914; but it was not till after the war that he began to assemble his fleet of sailing vessels.

By the thirties his big fleet, which consisted mostly of four-masted barques, was one of the oddest sights in the modern world, plying unabashed in the wheat trade between England and Australia.

They were culled from the scrap heaps of maritime nations for rag and bone prices, for Gusta seldom paid more for a ship than he could earn with her in a year. Down at heel they might be when he bought them, but it was never long before he had bullied back into them some of their old spunk and glory, all strictly for profit. Gusta could be sentimental, but with him sentiment came a poor second in any clash with business; nevertheless he deemed it good business to have his ships well-cared for.

Though by the time his fleet was at its zenith the rest of the world had come to regard commercial sailing ships as junk, Gusta's barques were the biggest and finest ships Åland had ever owned. Everyone was proud of Gusta (in Lemland his surname was never added) for his astuteness in buying them up cheap and running them so competently. What if the big liners did edge up to them at sea and peer as if they had been a peep show? The barques gave the Ålänningss a fine opportunity for exercising their traditional skill. They might grumble at his mingy wages and joke about his watchword, "Economy", but they were proud to sail in his square-riggers, and wondered, rather nervously, how Åland would manage without them and without this busy-bee of a man who kept such a stir going in the otherwise sleepy Mariehamn.

There were one or two streamlined offices in Mariehamn, which I expected to enter when Sven said that he must go and see the owner. Instead of which we walked up a conch-lined path into a very green garden and were greeted by a lively girl who had been seated under a sun umbrella. Sven left me with her while I could hear him talking from a tiny doll's house which jutted out behind the house. This was Gusta's office.

Fru Eriksson joined her daughter and presently her husband and Sven came out and we drank tea.

"Tea," they gurgled, "because we know the English *hate* coffee in the afternoon, and *like* tea!"

I already knew the sad, serene, handsome face of Hilda Eriksson from the portrait which hung in many of the barques' saloons; but Gusta did not look at all like that other portrait which faced it.

He was one of those people whose outer man is nondescript, but who nevertheless impresses himself upon others by the churnings of his spirit. As my host at tea he was a courteous stranger, one who might have had no connection with that rampant personality I knew through the tales of his masters and mates.

I must, however, have made a favourable impression on him, or perhaps he just could not bring himself to refuse the captain of

his flagship, for when Sven revealed to him that we were to be married, he broke an old rule and allowed me to sail in *Herzogin*, not only to Copenhagen, but on the whole world voyage.

After that Mariehamn looked quite different. It had been full of leafy charm, but now that I knew I did not have to spend the next ten months in it, learning to be a docile captain's wife on my own, its decorous prettiness held no threat for me. To all those we met I innocently revealed my rapture. To sail again in *Herzogin* as Sven's wife was a prospect little short of paradise.

However, not a woman envied me. I had to live in Åland and understand it a great deal better before I found out why. Åland captains' wives frequently met their husbands in England and sailed up to the Baltic with them, or from a Baltic port to Copenhagen, but they neither wanted, nor were wanted on, long trips. At home, entrenched on their farms or in their dapper Mariehamn establishments, the Åland women were the bosses. Inevitably, for untold generations they had been left at home to hold the baby, keep the fires burning and provide shelter for the sailors' old age. It was the viking pattern.

Driven to the sea by the bleakness of their land and climate, and spurred by their love of the good things of life which could not be wrested from the earth alone, the men went foraging. The pillage and plunder of early times in longships changed with evolving civilization to honest trading in barques.

What gave the men their power and freedom was the ship. Once afloat, they were the bosses; but ashore, in the homes where they reigned in the long absence of the men-folk, the women enjoyed complete dictatorship.

Noah's wife, say the Älänings, made a nuisance of herself in the ark until luckily it sprang a leak. Though she protested, the Old Man sat her on it; that kept her occupied and saved the ark—which explains why womenkind have such cold bottoms.

Only after hearing this did I become aware of the low temperature of my own, and vowed never to capitulate to the Noah's wifishness that is in every woman.

While we waited for the Finnish air to inoculate me for the marriage ceremony, which could not be accomplished under three weeks, Sven and I stayed at Pellas. It was the first time he had been free of the ship for several years and something of the delight of boyhood returned to him as we roamed among the forests, fields and waters of his old home.

To his surprise I did not feel that Pellas was archaic, dull and countrified. For me it had a legendary loveliness; the high red wooden windmill, the great kitchen stove with its canopy of masonry, the brilliant toadstools that spattered the forest floor, the rows of belled harness hung on the attic rafters, the frames of the huge loom stowed in the enormous barn, the four-foot-thick walls of the cowshed, the dusty jumble of sleighs and traps which lurked in the sheds, the granary, the stacks of fishing nets, the gnarled juniper bushes, the fine green turf, the birch glades, and, centre of it all, the house itself, standing largely against the sky with a fleet of outbuildings astern.

One struggling rowan tree leant beside the front steps, quite a newcomer because it had been planted after grandfather died. He had been a stickler for "clear decks" and no tree had been allowed to grace the approach to the house: but it was he who had also so delighted in his grandchildren that he had held them up and allowed them to tinkle the crystal chandeliers.

"Which is the reason why," Sven's mother informed me, wryly, "so many of them are chipped."

There were some things that were harsh and clumsy about Pellas, but it was a house whose faults had been redeemed by a wealth of love for children. Irene Eriksson had born and brought up nine in that house, and had also sheltered four orphaned nephews; now her grandchildren crowded about her, all sure of a welcome. When she sat, she sat in her rocking chair by the kitchen window, knitting on week days, or reading the Bible on Sundays, the haven of all those who needed a few tears wiped or just a comforting cuddle. No child of hers could do such wrong that she would not hug it, forgive it, and comfort it, albeit adding

a few stern words of wisdom. Under her sway, in the glowing September weather, Sven and I regained something of our childhood for a bemused three weeks, for to her Sven was still her youngest child but one, and I some childish treasure he had brought home.

Like most Älänings Sven had gone out sailing as soon as he had any strength and sense, at fifteen under the care of his elder brother, who was mate in a barque bound for the U.S.A.

That didn't make being a ship's boy any easier. In fact, Nils felt at liberty to tell him that he was the clumsiest, slowest, most useless, seasick incompetent and that he would never make a sailor. He was seasick for weeks.

A month out from New York he fell into the hold and broke his feet. He lay a month in the fo'c'sle, a month in hospital, and was still hobbling when he returned home. Ten years later he was offered the command of the finest ship Åland had ever owned, Gustaf Erikson's four-masted barque, *Herzogin Cecilie*.

When Nils told him that he would never be a sailor it was like a goad. His father, both his grandfathers, his uncles, two of his brothers, had all commanded ships. The talk of ship masters had rung in his ears since he could remember, appraising men and vessels, so that in his mind there grew an image of the ideal ship and the ideal sailor. In his obstinate young heart Sven resolved to become "the best sailor in the world". It was already 1918. He did not realize he had been born fifty years too late.

There were not many spells at Pellas after that. In schooners and barquentines, in the timber trade crossing and re-crossing the North Sea, he hammered out the practice that would allow him to sit for his second mate's ticket in navigation school in Mariehamn. Then into the nitrate trade in barques, and back for winter school between, for chief mate's and finally master's ticket, which he took before he had his full practice.

By that time Gustaf Erikson's fleet was absorbing large numbers of Åland seafarers. Not very many had yet deserted sail for steam. When Sven was made chief mate in *Herzogin* under Captain Ruben

de Cloux, who had already shewn her mettle, he was almost at the top of his profession. A year later he became her master—and her slave.

I could well imagine old August Eriksson, both pleased and alarmed at the news, penning with much thought a letter to his son.

‘You are much too young and too inexperienced,’ he wrote, ‘and I consider it madness for you to accept the command of such a large valuable vessel. However, as I know you will not take my advice and refuse the offer, I ask you to listen to what I have to say. At all times you must regard the ship as your own, at the same time putting the owner’s interests first. . . . Be extremely careful and accurate in your navigation and handle canvas with due regard to its expense. Never forget that the duties of a master go a long way further than the mere sailing of the ship. Make sure that you have adequate provisions, especially enough water, as well as all spare equipment you may need for repair and replacement. This is most important on the long deep-water voyages which lie ahead of you. Keep strict discipline on board. . . .’

It was a long letter. In his pride and agitation the old man put into it all the wisdom distilled from his own years as master. He repeated his advice to refuse the command. Finally he wished his son God-speed and the good luck which would save him from his own folly. ‘Don’t take any of this amiss,’ he concluded, ‘for it is written with only good intent.’

August was gone now. The most poignant reminder of him was a small worn depression where he used to lean his head against a cupboard while sitting on the wood box by the kitchen stove. He had sat there, savouring the talks he had had with his son after time and again Sven had brought the “large valuable vessel” safely round the world. One of the memorable times of his latter days had been his visit on board when *Herzogin* lay for the first time in her home port of Mariehamn. At last he was reassured that his son was a man, like himself, and no longer a boy ‘given over to folly’.

Sven smiled as he remembered how impressed his father had been with the strength and size of *Herzogin* and the elegant comfort of his own quarters. It was a smile obscured by a film of miller's dust, for we were tending the grinding of oats in the windmill. I had not realized that these fabulous contraptions, familiar from the illustrations of Grimm and Andersen, still existed. But there we certainly were, clambering up and down inside the red wooden box, all of a creak, with the wooden sails whishing at every gust, coated in flour and soothed by the delicious smell of tepid, new-harvested and new-ground oats.

Once a madman had sought refuge up there, naked and screeching, in midwinter.

"Up and make fast," the older men had roared, as if the mill were a ship and the madman a sail. Grandfather had said the mill was to be kept locked after that.

This grandfather was an intriguing shade. Though Pellas lay so quiet now, with her sons all gone and her mistress alone and aged, the bustle and stir of his personality still echoed in the talk. He loomed behind his son August, against a background of ship-building, house-building, horsemanship and sea ventures from which, it was said, he returned with money in a wool sack.

Sven could just remember him as a very old man who loved his pipe, but was forbidden to smoke. His long-stemmed *meer-schaums* were hidden from him and in the twilight of senility he had wandered about Pellas holding an elbow as if it were the pipe's bowl and putting his thumb to his lips, trying to puff a little comfort into his worn old body. The young men of the household were furious with the doctor. "Let *Farfar* have his pipe and his drink too," they cried. "It's a shame to see him sucking his thumb. If it shortens his life what does it matter. He'll get a little pleasure out of it."

But the women were fearful of the doctor, and so *Farfar* had to content himself with memories, unsweetened by smoke, unmellowed by *brännvin*.

How fine his fleet of brigantines had been—*Ceres*, *Frederika*,

Trefanta, Eli, Leo—fourteen ships in all had he sailed and there many of them still were, their flags fluttering, their sails drawing full, men in the rigging and men on deck, well down in the water with profitable cargo, sailing merrily round him in both *stugan* and *salan*. Wooden ships all, some of them built under his direction on the sheltered shores of his own home.

Those had been the days—there had been so much which *Farfar* could do well. He had built *Frederika* and then sailed her himself, coming back with 63,000 marks the first year. He had promptly built and bought others. Folk had nicknamed *Leo* “*penningdraken*”—the money dragon—so much had she earned. With what satisfaction he had presided at the “owners party” where amid skåls and merrymaking, he had distributed the dividends to the minor shareholders who had backed him; his friends, neighbours and admirers all.

Farfar, Erik Petter Eriksson, could have done with half-a-dozen sons, but his neat, pretty, downright little wife had given him only one, and a daughter. So Pellas took much of his time; but presently he had four ships being built simultaneously in another parish and had begun on plans for the big new house which was to crown the northern rise above Granboda. Then there had been his horses in which he took such a pride, urging them to a light-some trot through the villages, though he was careful to spare them by ambling sluggishly in the forests between.

“*Hei!*” the children had cried as the spinning wheels of the *trilla* had flashed by. “*Hei! hei! See Pellasen how he goes!*”

Then *Farfar* had always been available for those who needed his telling wisdom as an advocate in court. As for auctions, crowds came and prices soared if he could be persuaded to act as auctioneer.

I gazed long at the stiff photo of Erik Petter and his wife in its lifebelt frame. It was easy to see where Sven had got that great cliff of a nose and the wide pale luminous eyes. But Erik’s was a face in which a sort of proud vitality was not softened by the humorous quirk which blessed his grandson; or perhaps it had

been extinguished by the ordeal of portrait photography in the eighties.

"I can just remember Mery and I being left alone with him and told to watch him so that he didn't get hold of his tobacco box," Sven said, "it was hidden up behind the kitchen stove."

"Let's see if it's there still!" he exclaimed, and disappeared through a cupboard door into a vast mass of masonry from which gentle warmth always exuded. There was a rummaging sound like a cat seeking a rat and he clambered down hugging a small wooden box. It was *Farfar's*, sure enough, but empty and dusty, without the sharp knife and the plug which it had been his habit to shred up ready for his meerschaum.

Sven looked at it silently and then closed the lid.

"You see," he said, "the old man was so hazy in the head that even if there wasn't any tobacco there he shredded away at his own thumb."

We looked at each other, aware that it would be best to die before one had burnt one's brains out.

September was ripening. All over Åland the deep-water sailors, the captains and the mates, who had been lucky enough to get home, were packing and telephoning and paying farewell visits, hardly bothering to conceal the fact that they were glad to be off. By mid-October the grain fleet must be on its way south. We too must soon quit dreaming over the past at Pellas and journey to the ship.

Satisfied that he was getting his old chief and second back and that Åland's best sailmaker was again promised him, besides his favourite donkeyman and an adequate carpenter, Sven turned his attention to the pressing problem of a steward. There was only one man whom he wanted and that was his cousin's husband, Gunnar.

Much of our roaming had been in the direction of Gunnar's home, Hansas, in order to woo this paragon of all stewards. At last he allowed himself to be persuaded, but Sven's triumph had been rather long-faced, because the only bait that would tempt

him was a wage as high as the chief mate's. I was appalled, thinking of the difference in their skills, but scarcity makes its own values.

Gunnar was also persuaded to bring along a crate of his high-production hens. Sven tried to wrest from him the promise that they would perform that miracle of laying eggs on the Horn passage, but Gunnar only smirked enigmatically and said,

"It depends."

The bargain was sealed over coffee, out of a burnished copper kettle which I was beginning to recognize as the talisman of every Åland home.

I sat there, sipping the coffee, munching the slice of sweet, white bread which always accompanied it, trying to lay my mind on the unique quality which pervaded social relationships in Åland. It baffled me, for, though I had travelled much, I still accepted the class system of western Europe as inevitable. There didn't seem to be a vestige of it here, at least not in the country, though I guessed that the *Mariehamnare* were prone to "set themselves up". The criticism was no more definable than that. Everyone had respect for someone who could make money, but they did not look down on someone who did not, unless he was lazy and good-for-nothing.

The country folk were divided into the farmers, who had inherited their land and forest, and the *torpare* or cottagers, who had once given their labour to the farmer as rent for each his dwelling and acre, but who were now free. They provided the only agricultural labour available, but this had become very scarce because the ex-*torpare* preferred either to fish or to go to sea.

Sailors came from both groups. There were many captains and mates who had been born in a *torp*, and there were farmers who had sailed only before the mast. However, there was practically no family whose menfolk had not had some experience of the sea. It was their common bond, manifest in an extraordinary feeling of equality between man and man. It was many years before I found out that this was a legacy from very early times. Åland

graves of viking times which have been examined reveal that there was no system of chieftains as on the Scandinavian mainland, but that each family must have been independent, though they may have co-operated with others for various pursuits, or joined the mainland expeditions which went foraging on the great eastern route to Miklagård. It is clear, however, that they owed allegiance to no man. Ashore all was equality. Once afloat the discipline of sea rank held sway, and "Pellas Sven" became unquestioningly *Kapten*.

Zest for the moment became our mood as we prepared to depart. We dragged out *Farfar's* four-wheeled *trilla*, greased the long-disused hubs, re-shod old Kurre, and hoped everything would hold together for the few miles from Pellas to the parish jetty, where we were to join the Åbo steamer.

Granboda was slightly shocked, because captains always hired taxis, but Pellas Irene and Ebba, and Mery, whose own husband Linus Lindvall had already left to rejoin *Olivebank*, quite understood the gaiety of the moment.

"Just remember that Kurre is old, Sven," they admonished as we departed.

Our rear guard was Sven's brother Jens bowling along behind, with the overflow of luggage in his farm cart, and Paik, Sven's Alsatian comrade of many voyages, loping on our flank.

Very lovely Lemland looked that day in the pale September sunlight. This low jumble of pink granite, glinting water, serried forest and green meadow, among which the red and white timber houses were dotted as casually as mushrooms, was swiftly engaging my heart. It had such a wide sky, such an air of mirage floating between sea and heaven. Today the flames of autumn were beginning to glow in the birch trees, and oak leaves already eddied in the church avenue.

The track to the jetty meandered bumpily along the shore of an inlet, and already clustered there was the nucleus of the crew, the

second mate, Algot Leman, whom I had known as third, squarer in the face than ever, and the amiable Gunnar and his hens, cooped and cackling. Our luggage much increased the pile. My Chinese cedarwood chest, used to the same casual sort of island jetty in Polynesia, looked quite at home.

The second and Sven were talking.

"*Ja, Kapten,*" he said.

In a flash Pellas Sven was no more, and gone the easy parish relationships. Gunnar was already sprinkling his remarks with "*kapten*".

Everyone kept an ear open for the whistle of the steamer. Presently she appeared, apparently straight out of a fir forest, and bustled up to the jetty. To the mooring of a cow passenger we bundled on board.

There, lank, debonair and hard-fisted, was *Förste*, Elis Karlson, the chief mate, the man who had said to me, somewhere in Lat. S. 50 over a year before:

"I think I could make quite a good sailor of you," and then doubtfully, some while later—

"But you must choose between the skipper and the ship."

Now his hand grasp was as warm as ever, and he gave me a brotherly whack on the back and called me by the old name "Nils", choosing to ignore the fact that I was the captain's bride-to-be.

With him were some more of the crew, sea bags stuffed to bursting point. Paik, greeted by the chief, gave him a condescending tail-wag. The second whom he knew just as well, he all but ignored. There never was a bigger snob than Paik.

Åland I was not a romantic craft. Its toot was hoarse, its bulk was squat, its mechanical guts were not decently veiled but were all too evident by their belch and clatter. It ambled cheerfully through the thronging islands, often lopsided and usually crammed with cargo, inert, animal and human, which was constantly being shuffled, shoved and shifted on and off at each jetty. But it was

homely and companionable and astonishingly clean, down to the last detail in the rudimentary cabins which no one bothered to occupy until the small hours.

Planted in the middle of its deck was a glass-windowed house where food and drink could be obtained all through the night. Until darkness fell nothing could drag me from the rail where I could gaze my fill at the rosy granite shores and hanging forests of the enchanted islands we were passing. Glimpses of grassy birch glades, their bark shimmering pale in the twilight, fantastic wooden villas clinging to miniature crags, grey-weathered huts crouching above boats drawn up on the smooth rock, a horse tossing its long mane and tail, knee-deep in sedge as it stared at the steamer; everything was tantalizing and slightly magical as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope. Finally Sven herded me in for a reindeer tongue sandwich and some coffee. The two mates were already at the table and we launched into a modest feast, of which reindeer tongue proved only the prelude. There was nothing to do but eat, drink and gossip the whole night, with snoozes in between.

These journeys to ships were an important part of the Åland sailor's life. Sven well remembered his first, when at fifteen he left home to travel with his brother to England. Nils had told him that "Yessir" was a proper reply to anything an English person might say to him. His neighbour at table on the crossing had been a pretty English girl and "Yessir" he had replied to all her attempts at conversation, shuffling his home-made boots with awe.

At Åbo we spent our last pennies on equipment for me; a mighty overcoat, and Finnish thigh boots, *pjäxor*, after which my heart had long yearned. The square toes turned up in a hook, the light soft leather wrinkled on one's legs, the laces dangled at the back of one's knees. They were flauntingly picturesque, but they were also very comfortable and the warmest footgear for dirty weather.

We only had enough money left for each his humble *filbunke*,

which is the Finnish youghourt, and then it was time to gather at the bus for Uusikaupunki.

By this time our crew had snowballed. When the driver saw the cluster of robust boys, the mound of luggage, the large Alsatian and Gunnar's hencoop, he started to shout in Finnish at the whole collection. The Swedish-speaking Ålänning hardly understood him. They intended going in his bus to their ship whatever a mere Finnish driver might say. *Förste* pretended to lose his temper and let out a bellow which started the hens squawking and momentarily quietened the driver. Under cover of Paik's growling Sven thrust me in as a spearhead. The driver started to gesticulate again, but before he had lashed himself up to his former rage, the mates and an A.B. had stowed and roped everything firmly somewhere in or on the bus, reassured the twittering Gunnar that his hens were not in a draught, and were themselves being marshalled in by Sven, who took his seat beside me in a patriarchal glow. Through the steaming windows we could see the disappointed faces of other would-be passengers. Stolidly crammed, we stood and sat, waiting for the driver to swallow his pride and start.

"*Förbannen Finne!*" said *Förste* loudly and clearly. I gathered this was in mild retaliation for being called "a devilish satan's sprig of a son of a berserk mad Ålänning". Rumbling mutinously, the driver finally let out the clutch with a crash and we shot forward at a sickening pace.

It was dark when we reached the ship. She was as drowsy as a broody hen, bored stiff with the toilet she had been undergoing in the owner's shipyard. Her great rigging towered in the gloom above us, bare and lifeless as a winter tree. Her decks rang hollowly.

Below the air was dank and musty. It was almost as if the ship were drugged. Astern at the same quay lay the four-masted barque *Lawhill*, already manned. We had scarcely lighted the lamps with numbed fingers before her master's voice was booming pleasantly in our ears, inviting us to supper on board with his wife.

Artur Söderlund was as much a fixture in *Lawhill* as Sven was in *Herzogin*. His very presence, rubicund and sonorous, warmed the chill air. He was not a tall man and middle age had brought its corpulence, but from him emanated a downright kindness which no one could withstand. He was so obviously a happy, family man.

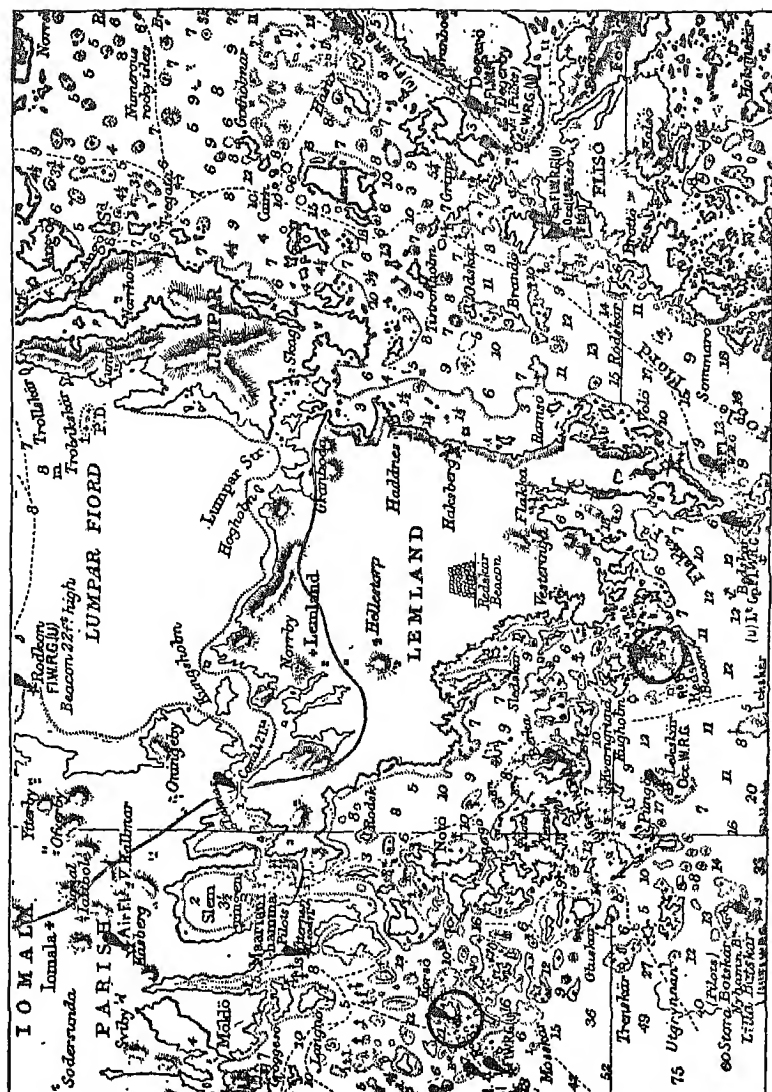
"Ha, ha, huh!" he clucked. "You're the one for comforts! I hear them already poking away at the central heating. Can't offer you that in old *Lawhill*, but at least we've got some food and a drink or two over there and you're very welcome. Tomorrow we'll come and warm ourselves up with you."

It was a pleasant evening. The two men comfortably talked the talk of captains whose ships are their darlings, and Fru Söderlund and I beamed sympathetically at each other, quite unaware of our impending museum value as the last two sailing-ship skippers' wives who would accompany their husbands on deep-water voyages.

By the time we returned to the ship Gunnar had made up the bunks, lighted more lamps, stoked the furnace, fed his hens, and gone to bed, leaving everything cosy and familiar, even to the sound of one of the mates snoring gently in his cabin. Damp as they were I snuggled into *Herzogin's* sheets, so infinitely glad to be home again at last.

A hive-like bustle started as soon as it was light next morning. Only a few days remained to prepare the big barque for sea. It meant plenty of work for a crew, most of whom were strangers to the ship. It was dankly cold, too, and the mates kept themselves warm cracking out orders or rushing into the rigging when the fumbling became too bad. The few A.B.s from last voyage hooted their exasperation. The new boys hung their heads and did their bewildered best. Many tons of sail had to be lugged and hauled from lockers to rigging and there bent and made fast.

Förste, with a fistful of lists, shook his head when asked if there were any Nelsons among the new ones.



LEMLAND AND MARIEHAMN, ÅLAND ISLANDS

(Reproduced from Admiralty Chart No. 2297 with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office and of the Hydrographer of the Navy.)

"It beats me how we're ever going to get out of this filthy little port through those skerries with these slab-handed idiots," he growled, "but it always seems hopeless at this stage. Wait till we get to sea—if we get to sea, behind that miserable little tug. Have you seen her? She'll be scared out of her life even to come near us."

His simultaneous frown and grin were characteristic.

Lists, and more lists were showered upon me—pork, beans, butter, beef, beetroot, bolts, blocks, bitumen—"just write this letter—tell the office—just send off these books—just see—just do—just go . . ." Sven gloried in having a free secretary.

I thumped docilely at the typewriter though I would rather have been lugging sails. However, silently but mutually we had agreed that in port, at least, I should act like a lady.

Uusikaupunki, or Nystad, as the Swedes more soberly called it, offered nothing in the way of relaxation. It was a grey, dreary orphan of a little town. The prettiest things in it were the mammoth baskets of scarlet cranberries for sale in the market place. It was entertainment enough to watch Sven haggle with a warty old witch who presided over a pile of these.

In a London-cut pin-striped suit, topped by a grey Homburg, with yellow pigskin gloves and a malacca cane, he was incongruously debonair in that drab setting. As he started the attack she eyed him with sullen apprehension. Suspicion smouldered in the eyes under her kerchief. This was surely a queer one and what did *he* want with her cranberries anyway? Finally, she demanded a sum which seemed fair enough to me, but at which Sven merely smiled ironically. He suggested a lesser. She wrinkled her mouth scornfully and looked away. Sven strolled on to the next vendor, a young girl with one moderate basket, whose berries were bright enough, but small. He gave her what she asked. It was less than the witch's price. He paused, looking round for a taxi.

This seemed too much for the old woman.

"If the gentleman will give me ten pennies a kilo more than her,

he can take the lot," she grunted sourly, stirring the berries in the nearest basket with a gnarled hand.

Sven drew the notes out of his wallet and gave them to her, administering at the same time the warm, courteous, charming smile, which had won him many friends.

"Keep the change," he said.

The change was about the difference between the old price and the new. She looked blankly suspicious for a moment. Then merriment burst over her face like a custard pie.

"The gentleman must be a foreigner—or otherwise he's on his way to his wedding," she crackled. "They're good, big berries at any rate, down below as well as on top—worth the money!"

She fussed and hustled to get her berries into the taxi unharmed.

And what did a four-masted barque want with a taxi-load of cranberries? Why, for the cook to pound them into jam to eat with boiled blood bread and salt pork. It was the greatest treat on the menu for all except poor me. On blood bread days I slimmed. I had never got over the horror of seeing the blood spurting, all hot and steamy, from the pig's throat into a bucket, there to be whisked with flour into a glowering froth.

"Make a man of you—go on—try it," everyone had said; but however much I had wanted to be made a man of, then, my puking stomach rebelled. Now I couldn't even bring myself to help the cook make the cranberry jam. It was too like frothy floury blood itself when raw.

In spite of the Lemland parson's muffled banns we had not yet succeeded in getting married. I was not a great believer in the ceremony itself, and thought Sven unduly fussy and alarmed about the non-arrival of my papers from the British Embassy in Helsingfors. To his frenzied telephoning they purred firmly that the papers had already been sent.

Saturday dawned—sailing day—and by noon no papers had come. The postmaster locked the door and informed us as an afterthought that they might arrive at four o'clock, when he opened for twenty minutes for the last delivery.

In the brief spell we had alone after dinner, before he was caught up in the nagging last-minute business that besets any ship-master due to sail, we soothed ourselves with the knowledge that there would be another chance in Copenhagen. If the worst came to the worst, I said, surely he himself had the right to marry people at sea. What could stop him taking me in one hand and the prayer book in the other—but Sven shook his head.

"At four we go to the post office," he said. "None of your mad schemes."

At four, in a most impressive sealed envelope, there the papers were! We felt so respectable, holding hands in the taxi, with the envelope in Sven's inner pocket.

Thinking what a scramble it would be to get to the burgomaster by half-past five, we both forgot about the ring.

The mate had hastened into his best uniform to act as witness. His eyebrows twitched when he heard the news.

"I understand it is absolutely essential to have a ring, *Kapten*," he declared.

Sven looked at him quite wistfully. Surely a wedding ring had been one of the items on those long lists of his. But no, not in all *Herzogin's* multitudinous stores was there one single wedding ring.

I giggled helplessly, remembering that somewhere in the debris at the bottom of my jewel case was a Woolworth wedding ring, the relic of past theatricals. The mate hastened off to fetch a tin of brasso.

So, finally, we were married, standing there in front of the stiff old official ponderously mouthing the Swedish words with a strong Finnish accent.

Back in the taxi I asked Sven why the burgomaster had talked so much about adultery. It seemed a very fierce marriage service. After all, it was a bit early to begin thinking about adultery.

"My darling, my darling," he said, "not only will you have to learn much more about navigation; also I really must teach you proper Swedish. *Äktenskap* means marriage, not adultery."

The taxi was rattling back to the ship in the cold dark. I said, "Let's ask the mates in for coffee and *punsch* after supper. We've all been so busy, there hasn't been any time for a chat. Perhaps the Söderlunds would come over too. It's the coldest night we've had and they must be freezing. Hurrah for our central heating!"

An enigmatic chuckle answered this suggestion. "Have you planned anything else?"

"Wait and see."

But already we were come to the quay, and I had caught sight of the shimmer of the ship. What a vision she was, glowing with lights from jib-boom to counter and fluttering with flags, warm, welcoming and decked for festivity. A few snowflakes drifted down from a passing cloud above her. Like confetti, I thought. Her topmasts were pencilled against the crusty sub-arctic stars. Every porthole of the long half-deck beamed golden between the indigo shadows. She was solemn, and very beautiful, a web of soaring pillars and tracery, a gothic cathedral of the sea.

I was dumb with awed delight. Sven took my hand and we hastened below, where a hushed bustle betokened something else unusual. In the saloon we began throwing off coats and gloves.

"Quick!" said Sven, "before the burgomaster arrives," and held out his arms.

It was then that we heard the beating of the angels' wings, a mighty rushing sound of the spirit as we stood and looked at each other, my husband Sven and I, his wife, pausing to realize the marvellous moment, while the earth turned unheeding beneath us, and the stars winked down through the skylight of our home, the ship.

Some people never experience such a kiss, such an embrace, sacramental, more binding than any ceremony; some people never, and no one more than once.

I drew off the other glove as the mate knocked at the door and announced the burgomaster.

Other guests soon materialized, friends of Sven's from along

the coast who had been taken by surprise. Their batteries of Swedish made me giddy. Unfortunately mine was not of the formal, polite sort which would have been the only suitable style to adopt. There was nothing for it but to appear dumber than any blonde and assume a modest bridal smile.

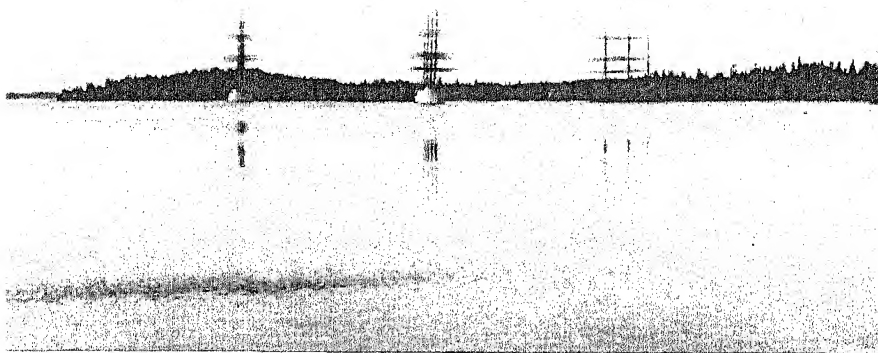
Gunnar had turned the mess room into a banquet hall. I sat there beside Sven at the head of the long, laden table, trying to look as beautiful as I felt, so that I would be a credit to him. *Skåls* clinked from glass to glass. Everyone was duly merry and ceremonious. Wit flowed, little of which I could grasp.

Out of the corner of my eye I watched the second mate quietly making the most of our wedding viands. He had always been partial to meat balls. Just as I was trying to copy the way he ate—one crunch to the right, crunch to the left, and swallow—I suddenly became the centre of a round of *skåls* and choked desperately on the *akvavit*. It was very hard for me to live up to the smooth, attentive jollity which Sven assumed so naturally when he played host. It was one of the things I would have to learn to do, otherwise I would have no right to the magnificent courtesy title of *kaptenskan*.

The burgomaster departed fairly early; at midnight the others drifted off. The mates dived with unnecessary promptness into their cabins and left us alone in the saloon, with the pots of blushing cyclamen they had given us, and a few dirty glasses and ash trays piled with cigar stubs. These Sven threw out of a port-hole to give the cyclamens a chance.

We both went to thump the new mattress sailmaker had made for the captain's bunk, which luckily could be pulled out to marital proportions. Very comfortable, we both agreed, but undoubtedly a tight squeeze.

"You", said Sven, "must not get any fatter. Your appetite is very hearty. Living a life of luxury with me in no time you'll be enormous, and I shall be a poor, little misery of a henpecked husband, so thi-i-n and pa-a-a-le . . ." We wrestled happily until Paik showed signs of joining the fray.



2. The anchorage at Västerhamn, 1935.

3. Pellas.





4. The four Hinders daughters. Ida, Irene, Amelia, Nanni. Milord's grand-daughte

5. Port Lincoln, 1936—after the Mayor's party. Six sailing ship skippers: one to six, Mikael Sjogren, Broman, Lindvall, Hagerstrand, Nisse Erikson and Sven.



Then we made a leisurely and loving tour of the captain's quarters, savouring every familiar detail. They were very beautiful and very dignified. The bird's-eye maple panelling glowed between mahogany pilasters crowned in gold. The coffered ceiling was ice-white enamel. In the skylight the tendrils of Sven's ferns made nests of delicate greenery. We sat down on the sofa that curved to the curve of the counter behind the panelled rudder shaft, and then in the two leather arm-chairs that flanked the round table above which hung a stormy painting of *Herzogin* herself, beating off the coast of Australia. We opened cupboards and drawers and enjoyed the well-stocked neatness of their contents.

In the bathroom Sven turned the taps on one by one to show how well they functioned, but warned me that not even the owner's shipyard had been able to repair fully the complicated German patent w.c.

"It still," he said, "gushes up and floats you off if you wriggle on the seat."

We laughed lowly, remembering the caprice of the passenger lavatory, which could drench the unwary from above when the ship heeled over in a squall.

It was now the early hours and the tug was coming at dawn. We went on deck and walked briskly up and down, dispelling the fumes of the party. No necessity to talk. We knew that we were, in spite of our faults and failures, two of the luckiest and happiest people on earth, to whom the gods had given everything our hearts desired, crowned and bound by that most mysterious of all forces, love.

For the lighter aspects of love we had little thought or opportunity for a good while. After a hasty breakfast by lamplight, dawn came bleakly, announced by the forlorn wail of Uusikau-punki's tug. She was indeed small, and already exhibited signs of nervousness, cowering away from us like a mongrel pup confronted by a borzoi.

The wind was already purring in the rigging, seeming to gloat over the little tug, the untried and shivering crew, the anxious-looking mates. Before us lay a winding narrow passage through the skerries. I guessed the towboat skipper was eyeing our tremendous top hamper, and thinking of those nasty stories about big barques running down innocent tugs trying to do their duty.

It was a real danger, and actually was to happen a few years later in the Gulf of Finland to one of the Erikson ships. Sven and the pilot decided that the breeze would soon die and there was no danger anyway if the tug knew its business.

She made fast and we proceeded. After that I have no very clear picture of what happened, for I soon forgot I was the captain's wife, and spent hour upon hour heaving and hauling and thrusting ropes into the hands of bewildered new boys. The wind was gusty, rain spat down on us, from the fo'c'sle head Sven's and the mate's voices boomed and echoed.

Volleys of Finnish drifted from the tug. Roars and yells of helpless rage rose to a screech. There was a muted splash and, incredible as it may seem, the tug lost its nerve and abandoned us. Without so much as a lurch or a shiver, *Herzogin* quietly planted her stern on the gravelly beach of an islet before ever her anchor reached the bottom.

Sven was not one given to bad language, but he had a hidden reserve which he now brought forth in all its polyglot glory. It hissed and crackled over the water to where the tug was now facing us, waltzing nervously to keep her position, her captain aghast at what she had done.

"*Joanna*," the mates were murmuring, as if invoking a patron saint.

"Yes, go back and send a telegram for *Joanna*, you big sh—t," Sven concluded, rather lamely, "and come back and get me to some sort of anchorage."

"*Djävla anama satanas finnar*," thundered the mate before they settled down to a short, dry, efficient consultation about what was to be done.

"And who is Joanna?" I asked the second, who was standing at ease like everyone else, waiting for the Captain's plan.

"Don't you know the owner's tug *Joanna*? She is bigger and not a damn silly fool like the Finn."

As we were stuck almost in the middle of the narrowest part of the fairway the tug would have to make shift to get us out of it for the night. It was narrow indeed, for one could distinctly see a group of crows assembled in the tops of two pine trees on the opposite shore. Sven was stroking his chin and eyeing them, and the mate was eyeing him.

When the orders came they were so sharp and sudden and rumbled on so loudly as the A.B.s repeated them, that not only the crew sprang to life, but the crows, in alarm, catapulted into the air.

Förste's hunched, rolling walk as he passed on to the catwalk told me that some long, hard, but quite enjoyable task was afoot.

"See some fun now, Nils," he threw at me. "We're going to make the anchor chain fast round those pines and warp her off!"

So it came about that towards evening, when everything was in readiness, the humbled tug once more at its station, the chain run out to the pines, steam up in the donkey boiler, and everyone very weary, with one tremendous heave and clank and distracted hoots from the tug, we slid afloat without demur, and were held in deep water while the chain came in. So intent was I on watching the receding gravel astern that I failed to notice that the pine trees had disappeared. As the final link clanked in they suddenly peered over the port bow, shaking their green tops at us, their roots dangling in the water.

"Burnham wood is come to Dunsinane," I murmured, but Sven had another idea.

"No. No," he said. "*Herzogin* has made herself a bridal wreath. Take care you don't make her jealous. Nils has got a bit above himself."

Part Two

1934—*FIRST VOYAGE*

II

Nils

NILS was something of a problem. He knew too much and he refused to be nailed in his coffin. Two of the mates and some of the crew recognized him from the 1934 trip up, 120 days of it, from Wallaroo to Belfast—a nice enough hulk of a creature, good at all the odd jobs, clumsy in the rigging, heavy and helpful on the end of a brace, devoted to the ship and apparently to the skipper too; for here Nils was, in the same old breeches, but with a resplendent new pair of *piäxors*, a good bit cleaner and tidier than he used to be, in quite a new role, comfortably installed as the skipper's better half.

Some remembered with awe that Nils had once, while scraping teak behind the chart house, suddenly seized a bucket of dirty water and thrown it with great gusto through the open skylight on to the august head of the skipper sitting reading in his saloon below. Nor could Nils's yells be forgotten when that dignitary rushed on deck, and swiftly catching the fleeing culprit, administered a first-class spanking on his bottom, in spite of protests about the privileges of girls and passengers.

I had a fierce tussle with Nils before, like Satan, he finally consented to get behind me. But like Satan, too, he was always there, and many a time I had to pick up his p's and q's and stuff them into the skipper's wife's knitting-bag.

Nils had a magic birth, for he was conceived and born in five minutes, armed with paint brush and scraper, springing fully clad in dungarees and gob cap out of the slow, humorous, fertile

brain of Anders Sunde, bosun of the Norwegian motor vessel *Thermopylae*.

It was the dinner hour. The fo'c'sle mess was as tidy and aseptic as a delivery ward. Stavanger *aegg* were then still a novelty to me and I was seriously munching them long after the others had pushed away their plates and were contemplating the phenomena before them—a she in their fo'c'sle—a she practically ordered there by the mate—a she of no previously encountered type or vintage—a she who lapped up all the cunning, wisdom and sea-lore that fell from their rich man's table—a she whom the mate said was to be treated like a he, worked as hard as a he—a she who certainly eat like two he's, yessus, how she was downing those Stavanger *aegg*—a she who must have a more manageable name than the one on the passenger list.

"Nils," said the bosun, contemplatively, "Nils Jacobs——" He sucked his pipe and his wide green slits of eyes glinted in the reflections from the newly enamelled walls.

"*Nils er dum men han er ikke idiot.*" He ran his broad fingers through his shock of fiery curls. "Nils," he rumbled at me, removing the fork and knife from my hands. "Go fetch paper and pencil. You can finish that ugggh stuff after." The last twenty-four hours had taught me to obey instantly the commands of this twenty-year-old dictator. He made me write it down and taught it to me parrotwise. "*Nils-er-dum-men-han-er-ikke-idiot.*"

When the mate told me what it meant I accepted it humbly. Dumb I might be but an idiot I was not, and if that was the fo'c'sle's opinion I was content. Nils Jacobs had found his niche, albeit a curious one.

Because I had once been Nils, the very newest, the very greenest Nils, and also, later, the Nils who consorted with the lords of the chart room, I found I had a very complex viewpoint. It dated from 1934 when, chipping rust in some secluded corner of *Herzogin*, Dickenson, the chubby English apprentice, had asked me whether I really thought the skipper was human. I let his chips flake down the back of my neck before replying.

Yes, he was, believe it or not, that carven face, that basilisk-stare, those icy commands and the faculty of materializing at all awkward or important moments were really very human traits in a man whose famous discipline and seamanship had made even one voyage in *Herzogin* an accolade for seamen. Not much use to tell Dickenson about the other side of the moon, forever hidden from the crew, the side about which I was jotting down in my diary:

‘A very original character, not influenced in any way by his role as master of a sailing ship. The sea is so much part of his blood and bone that he takes his mastery of it for granted, and in the extreme privacy and isolation of his life at sea allows his natural bents freedom. Consequently we get a young man in grey flannels with the slight stoop which often goes with great physical strength, wandering about followed by his other self, an Alsatian, both of them poking their long noses with interested dignity into whatever is afoot—a young man with a great appetite for books which is his only substitute for life apart from the life on board, devouring every idea that comes his way and moulding it to his own experience, slow-moving but intensely energetic, with broad delicate hands, curling upper lip, and receptive eyes, now large, now slits, now green, now blue, now a dead grey, gazing out from under a lintel of eyebrow and monumental forehead. Philosophers only are entitled to such foreheads. He seems never to be embarrassed, to give his loyalty hardly, to be both gentle and strict. I think his soul is bound up with the ship. Before I can hope to know him better, I must see him in bad weather, when the ship really needs him.’

We were down south in the fifties then, lugging our fifty-two thousand bags of wheat towards the Horn. Bad weather soon hit us. I then began to see that to sail such a strong self-willed beauty as *Herzogin* with a crew less than half she was built for—most of them in their teens—in waters whose fierce reputation was richly deserved, required the most every soul on board could give; instant obedience, unselfish co-operation, tireless energy, genius

on the part of the master, and finally, when man could no longer help himself, unabashed trust in the Almighty.

The boys, most of them not yet come to their full strength of mind or body, had to summon up from somewhere more muscle, more doggedness, more initiative, more unquestioning obedience than most modern men have occasion to use in a lifetime. No wonder that a training in sail still has its advocates.

Herzogin's topmasts were often a-quiver those days, as the raging westerlies bellowed power into her taut canvas. A thrumming and a throbbing never ceased in her rigging.

*Rain before wind, take your topsails in,
Wind before rain, loose your topsails again.*

It was a couplet which kept the crew scuttling, the mates ever-ready with their whistles and the skipper always at hand, apparently content with cat-naps on the chartroom sofa. However, it was routine; everyone enjoyed it. Everyone gave of their best to a ship so strongly and cunningly built to sail nobly in heavy weather. The plowter spread wide and seething on her lee. Routine it was, but how quickly it could shatter; it blew a gale, one evening watch, but nothing to speak of. A steady racing wind one point aft of beam, the most favourable quarter for her. Scurries of snow swept the leaning decks as the squalls came hurtling out of the darkness. There was no moon. The rigging was a black monster against the blackness of the sky.

Every rope and block sang its allotted tune and from all about the ship came the boom of water pounding on steel, of quivering canvas, of green seas slithering to leeward round the hatches.

I was on the port watch and by midnight we were all tired with five hours of nothing to do. The mate, hooked onto a stay where he could watch the weak fore royal, was agitated with the problem of whether to take it off or let her carry it. She was going like a bird. What a pity it was no other ship could see her now! What a sight she must be!

Eight bells struck and the second appeared on deck, muffled but alert.

"It blows," he said, looking with pleasure at the streaming white wake visible in the darkness.

The skipper suddenly loomed between the mates, monk-like in his skull-cap. The only visible light was the shaft of radiance from the chart-room porthole which fell on his aquiline face, emphasizing the calm mouth and the great wary eyes. Satisfied with the look of things he intoned a few words of advice and disappeared again.

We were thirty days out from Wallaroo. I was as yet unused to the intermittent sleep which is the lot of anyone on watch and was sometimes quite overcome by drowsiness. I had already fallen asleep while walking the deck, and been woken by bumping into a capstan. On this night I felt that to be able to sleep the clock round would be the pinnacle of bliss. At eight bells we turned in. I caught a glimpse of the mate in the pantry, delving for bread and jam. He called to me to join him in the feast, but the prospect of standing for even another ten minutes on an almost perpendicular deck was less tempting than my bunk. I did not even bother to light the lamp but kicked off my boots and wedged myself in. Whatever the weather the ordinary life of the ship went on. The mate ate his bread and jam—the port watch kicked off their boots—the captain . . . sleep descended on me.

Giants began to pound my body, to pluck off my blankets, to toss and jolt me out of my longed-for sleep. They bellowed and groaned in my ear, screeched, yelled, blustered, tore wood to splinters, thumped, creaked and hammered, creating a tumult fit to raise the dead. But I was not to be done out of my four hours sleep by a salt-pork nightmare, and resolutely clung to the bunk, refusing to be woken up!

Then suddenly, after hours it seemed, I was awake, open-eyed in impenetrable darkness. The nightmare persisted. Added to the din was the swish of water in the alley way. I groped in the darkness for my boots and lurched to the mates' cabins.

"*Förste!*" No answer.

"*Andra!*"

No answer. There was no one below. Something was dreadfully wrong. The door to the captain's saloon banged unheeded.

No one in the chartroom either. Through the port I could see nothing but sensed a sort of lightness above. Then below the screaming of the gale I heard a sigh, like the sigh a turtle gives when captured. Through the other door of the chartroom I looked into the skipper's office. Standing braced against the lee side in his long black oilskins, his sou'wester pulled low over his eyes, stood the skipper himself, calm, silent, the water swishing round his feet. Under one arm was a bottle of Hollands, in his hand a glass. At intervals crouched black figures darted in through the lee door and gratefully gulped down the gin, before disappearing again into the inferno on deck.

In a tranquil, solemn voice, the skipper began telling me the tale of the last hour. The gale, so steady at midnight, had without warning, swerved to a squall at a second's notice. The ship, ploughing through heavy seas at fifteen knots, was caught aback before she answered to the spinning wheel. Three square-sails were left. The rest were in tatters, streaming out from the yards in defiance of the men trying to master them. For some time she had been almost under water, completely at the mercy of the sea and wind, now forged into one devilish weapon. The port lifeboat had disappeared, railing, gratings, companionways had been demolished, and worst of all, the fine new foresail, double nought canvas only bent a few days, was half in ribbons and half in the water. We were now hove-to, helpless, hoping the wind would lessen, trying to clear up the mess. His voice went relentlessly on, reciting further tragedies.

"Dem it, dem it," he kept repeating as if he were chanting a litany. Presently he anchored me to the gin bottle and told me to dole it out, half a glassful at a time, to anyone who came along. The steward, the only one beside myself who had been doing nothing at all, was lurid in his protests at this ration. He wanted a full glass.

Every little while the mates would come in, their faces encrusted with salt, their voices like the canvas overhead, torn to shreds, cursing the badness of the crew which had lost some of the sails, but in spite of their exhaustion, exhilarated, especially the third, who had seen the lifeboat go while swimming round the poop.

Seas were still sweeping over the foredeck, though the long poop was now free of water, Dawn came, revealing *Herzogin* in all her bleak glory, for in spite of her battered decks and tattered sails, she was glorious, tilting over the seas as they mobbed her and tossed her on their crests, hammered her sides, and allied with the wind to pluck out her masts by the roots. We were lucky still to exist. When ships disappeared in these latitudes it was either ice—or something like this.

The mate croaked out a tale to me as he stood at the break of the poop, the salt cracking on his cheeks as he laughed. Orloff on the foredeck had nearly drowned. The skipper, in all that chaos, had found time to notice him, jump into the swirl and rescue him at risk to his own life. Then, once rescued, he had given him a savage drubbing for not hanging on as a seaman should. He smiled too at my tale. Norman, the new Australian apprentice, had spluttered horribly as he downed the gin, and said, "It's mai furst. Wot would old dad say?" and then, as there was no one else about, in a whisper. "Nils, think the skipper was frightened?—like ai wos?"

I had grinned and shaken my head. Fear had certainly not been an element in that calm figure in black oilskins.

Indeed, the skipper was a strange being. At thirty he was a mature male soul loving that ship as another man might love a woman. He knew the purport of every movement she made, and was often there on deck giving orders before the mate on watch knew what was wrong. Never for one instant in all those wild moments when canvas was being stripped off her, when the tops of her sturdy masts were trembling like reeds, when things were crashing and splintering on deck, did he believe that disaster

would overcome *Herzogin*. Once she was hove-to his voice dropped from a roar to its usual gentleness, and his hands, as they touched railing, capstan or compass, seemed to caress her as a reward. At eight bells, for a few moments, the mates and the skipper were together in the chartroom. I shall never forget the look on the faces of everyone in that company. It was sublime. The look of men who have been wrestling with a deity and have won.

"It's times like these that larn 'em," chuckled the mate, thinking of the crew, "but it's been tough for them, my children."

All the morning she heaved and lurched helplessly. The skipper took a bath, and presumably a short snooze, for he reappeared after a while looking refreshed, in slippers, silk pyjamas and a woollen dressing-gown. I was astonished, for I expected him, so little did I then know him, to fuss and worry, and cling to his oilskins and sea boots. The mates had been regaling me with tales of his story-book behaviour in the crisis. Like everybody else, I was all too ready to make the skipper into a hero, and here he was, spoiling the picture, not only in pyjamas and dressing-gown, but smelling of Florida Water as well!

He confided to me that he had been in tighter corners, but had never seen the wind reach such a force as it did after midnight. As the day went on, however, his opinions changed and he began to joke about "the little blow" we had had a few hours back.

Miraculously, dinner appeared, soup, potatoes and meat cooked all in one glorious pottage. Heaven knows how the seventeen-year-old cook had even managed to keep the galley fire alight.

In the afternoon watch clearing-up began. It took three hours to unbend the mainsail and re-bend it on the foreyard. Every man was needed, and I felt woefully inadequate for the tussle in the rigging. However, the humblest task fell to me and I was put at the wheel.

I was alone. Everyone was busy forward. The wheel kicked and bucked like a mule, as each wave hit the stern. It was only a matter of keeping her steady, but the bitter cold, the smashed

and empty binnacle in front of me, and the waves that kept lapping over the side and rushing round my feet were not encouraging. I was alone on the poop deck for a good while and to keep my courage up began to sing lustily, only silent when the wheel knocked the breath out of me.

Cold and grey and bitter and forlorn as it was, I felt *Herzogin's* exultant heart beating under my hand. In that moment I capitulated to her. She was not a ship, but a person, animated by a strange vitality of her own, claiming allegiance no less than a queen, and behaving always grandly in the tradition of her ancestors. Once in a while the skipper or the mate would go past, or a boy would lumber aft in search of something. Through the numbness of the cold I heard the mate whispering to himself, shaking his head, "She's a darling."

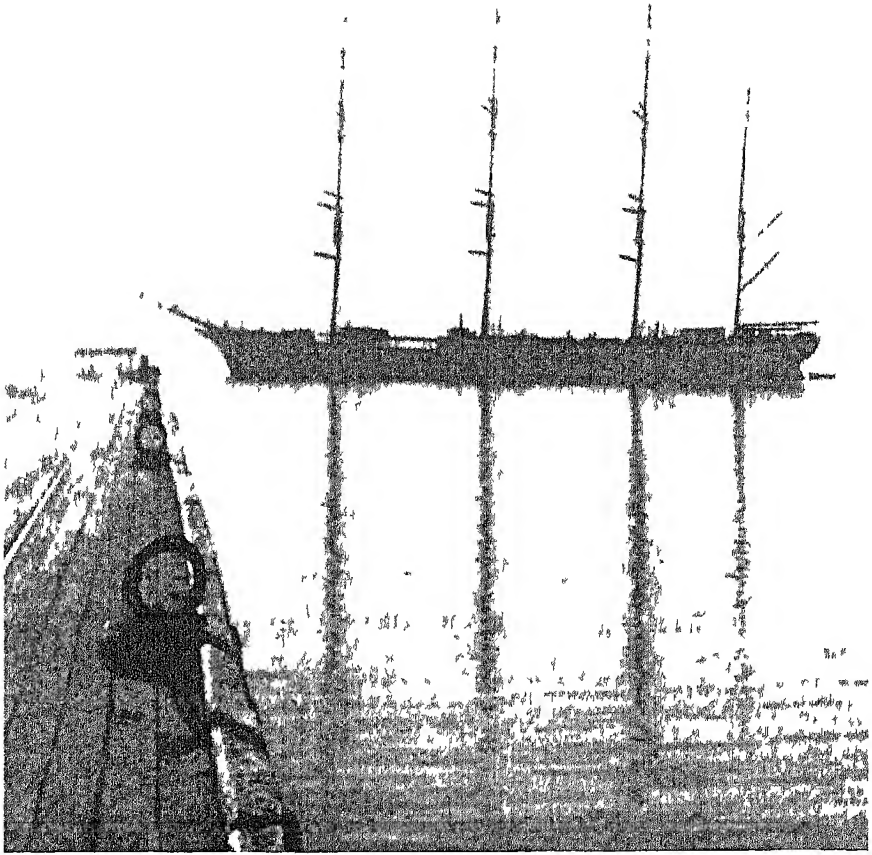
My left shoulder began to ache and my fingers to throb. Salt from the spray was clotting round my eyes. At last the foresail was bent, at last we were under way. She began to slide through the iron-grey water, no longer a coffin, wallowing in the trough of the sea, but a ship once more in possession of all her faculties. I began to understand why the skipper loved her. Before I knew where I was I was hopelessly in love with her myself.

III

1934—First Encounter

THE ship—how shall I describe her? She was registered as the four-masted barque *Herzogin Cecilie* of Mariehamn, gross tonnage 3111, net tonnage 2584, owner Gustaf Erikson. She flew the blue cross of Finland, her masts stood 200 feet high above the keelson; she carried some fifty thousand square feet of canvas, roughly a square foot of canvas for each bag of wheat she lugged from Australia to Europe every year, round the Horn, through some of the worst weather in the world, delivering it sound and whole except for the depredations of a few rats, and a few wet sacks. I could give dozens of facts about her, but that has been done by others. Parts of books and whole books have been devoted to her. Poems have been written about her, even some good ones. Journalists have filled many hundreds of columns with garbled accounts of her doings. On paper she was every man's prey and every man's darling, but she cared not a whit for any of that.

Strong, bold and beautiful, she seemed to know that her song was the swan song of her race. She sang it with all the lure of the last mermaid on the last rock. Boiled down, she was just a merchant vessel, plying her trade in competition with faster, bigger, machine-driven ships, the later products of man's ingenuity. Like them, she was an artifact, the result of the co-operation between man's brain and man's hands. Though infinitely more complicated than his first triumph of ingenuity, the humble pot, she was a simple thing compared to his latest gauntlet thrown before the



6. At anchorage at Wallaroo. The first time I saw her.



7. Nils by the spanker, wearing pjäxors.

gods, the nuclear pile. Nevertheless, *Herzogin Cecilie* was something more than steel, wood and canvas, as man's most loved creations are apt to be. No nuclear pile will ever inspire the same love and devotion, nor touch with magic the inner lives of those who serve it.

No one who loved *La Gioconda* would dare describe her as a whole composed of pigment, oil and canvas. Just so would no one who loved her deny to *Herzogin* components other than her steel, wood, canvas and rope; her intangible components—that which made her herself, like no other ship. I do not care whether they were imbued in her by Rickmers, her builders, or whether they accumulated during her thirty years at sea, drawn from the love and the hate, the loyalty and the suffering, and the few moments of ecstasy sometimes experienced by her crew; or whether it was the result of the extraordinary passion she had aroused in the being of Sven Eriksson, her master for the last eight years of her existence. But I do know that when I first encountered her in 1934, whatever the cause, she was more than just a ship.

She lay at anchor, fully loaded, her masts pencil slim, her reflection slightly a-wriggle in the flat waters of Spencer's Gulf. We tramped towards her in the afternoon heat, along the wooden jetty which grew endlessly, it seemed, out into the sea from Wailaroo. I complained of its incredible length, longer than all the streets of the little town put together.

"There's a longer one at Port Augusta," said the Captain, "and it's hotter there too. Wait till we get on board. You'll see how nice it is."

On and on along the jetty. My jaw ached where the Melbourne dentist had sawn out the wisdom teeth. My dress, in spite of a dip in dye, still showed the mould patches from long disuse in the South Seas. I thought of the gay little schooners I had been in, the outriggers bouncing in the spume, the banana boats, the dear old copra bug-infested *Waipahi*, and Willy, her master, my sea godfather.

"A couple of flannel shirts," he had said, selecting my wardrobe

from waterfront stores in Sydney. "Long under-pants, and tie your oilskins at wrist and ankles with twine, Nils. No good getting wet when you can't get dry. There won't be much washing except with sea water that seeps in, if I know windjammers."

As I tramped down the jetty beside the Captain I thought of all my excursions into seafaring life—the beautiful, clean, fast Norwegian motor ship, the freighter *Thermopylae* and her bosun Anders, who taught me the niceties of chipping rust, mixing paint, and roaming unharmed about the more dubious quarters of Sydney.

"Nils, we run now," he would say, and, paws clasped, we would scamper away leaving a spitting trail of harlots and astonished policemen. He treated me as an equal—as no Englishman whatever his class or education ever treated a female. It was the breath of life to me, bless him!

Then I remembered Jovesi, standing slim with a red rag round his middle, his feet in the foam on Ndravuni beach, bellowing on his conch to appease the gods of fish and fine weather. Another sort of sailor, Jovesi.

As the captain walked too fast for talking, I talked to myself.

"Nils, Nils, you are tramping down the jetty, horribly handicapped by your sex, your short-sightedness and the tenets of your education. But your infinite curiosity about the sea and seafarers is unappeased. Surely now, if you voyage in this ship, which is the culmination of man's mastery of wind, water and himself, you will get to know the men and the ship and their way of thinking and you will be content. It would all be so simple if you were a man. You would be a sailor yourself and that would be the end of it."

"Something started it, but what? Perhaps an angel's wing fanned it to life as you looked down, a small child, from the first-class railing of a mail ship, inarticulate, yearning to be with the sailors lounging on the hatch of the well deck below. Something must have been there, waiting to be fanned, the seed of some dormant gene which had lain, waiting and waiting, generation upon generation; or perhaps it was the echoes of your father's voice,

reading about the god Thor wading through the storm clouds Kormt and Ermt because Bifrost the rainbow was too fragile for him, struggling till he reached the zenith of the shimmering bridge where the three Norns sat, spinning men's fates. There was envy of Thor in his voice. Perhaps it was this edge of envy which fanned your dormant gene."

We were only half way down the jetty, but I felt I was stepping over the Awesome Threshold. Was this the captain, Sven Eriksson, the master of *Herzogin Cecilie*, tramping beside me, or was it the archangel Gabriel—certainly not Michael with the flaming sword! I laughed aloud at the fanciful thought—he must have thought I was cracked.

In spite of the grilling heat he looked now as young and mild as a cherub. Hadn't I mistaken him embarrassingly for an apprentice when he came to meet me at the train. But as he gave the boy waiting in the motor-boat some order I sensed the sternness of Michael in him. Later I came to recognize his place in the hierarchy. He was neither Gabriel, nor Michael. He was the Archbishop of the Sea.

It was not easy for me to talk because my mouth was sore and swollen. Long sojourn in the South Sea Islands makes most people yellow—too much sweat, rain, heat and sunburn. Even the whites of one's eyes turn yellow. As we chugged towards the immaculate white beauty, lying as quiet as a sleeping gull on the water, I felt a pang of jealousy. After all, in spite of the shield of "Nils" I was a woman, rather grubby and dishevelled, at a disadvantage before the lovely, well-groomed Duchess, the Duchess Cecilie of the High Seas.

I wished suddenly I had not come. I wished I had gone traipsing round the atolls with Viggo Rasmussen.

There was a sailor, too! His schooner, neat and trim as any tern, had lain temptingly in the lagoon at Raratonga. So temptingly, that when my shouts from shore had failed to rouse him or his family from their siesta, I stripped and swam out to her. He politely lent me his dressing-gown while he showed off his holy-

stoned home, due to sail next day for four months trading in the northern atolls.

"Why not come with us?" he said, "my boy and girl be ver' pleased your company."

Ah, Viggo, you nearly sidetracked me. If I had not resisted the temptation of your invitation I should perhaps never have heard the beat of angels' wings, nor felt the earth turning unheeded, standing under the skylight when *Herzogin* lay in Uusikaupunki. Wallaroo—Uusikaupunki—outlandish names they seemed to me then, but now they strike for me a deeper chord than London—Paris.

The motor-boat, trim and varnished, phutted dutifully towards the ship. "We made this," said the Captain, "on board."

I nodded casually, because I then did not know what making a motor-boat on board implied. If I then could have had a vision of the generations of ships which lay behind that motor-boat, seen the ribs of abandoned craft lying beside the rotting slips at the edge of Lemland's water meadows, seen the tumuli in the Åland forests, my nod would have been the nod of obeisance, the nod of respect, and not the nod of a foreigner who sailed a passage in the Åland grain ships and thought herself the hell of a knowledgeable tough, though she was blind, deaf and dumb.

My own family in England could pick out their ancestry back past the Wars of the Roses. They had coats-of-arms and were deeply conscious of their landed gentry tradition. How was I to know that "We made this on board" was as much a heraldic motto as "Honi soit qui mal y pense"; that the people whom I was to mix with henceforth were of a lineage and tradition more ancient and vital than theirs; and that at first, fascinated as an observer, I was later to be absorbed by them and to feel that I had come back to the tribe that was rightfully mine. How was I to know *that*, gazing awestruck at the luxury of the cabin to which Sven Eriksson showed me? Pink satin-edged blankets and a pink lampshade; that was not at all my idea of a sailing ship, even if you paid ten shillings a day for your passage.

In the hot afternoon the ship lay as quiet as a cathedral. Not a chink nor a chirp sounded from her. It was Good Friday.

I began to stow my things in the servried drawers under the high bunk, in the cupboards and in the empty cabin opposite where the captain said I might overflow.

"As you are the only passenger this trip," he explained.

He seemed to be all aloof courtesy; I would never have guessed with what distaste he viewed my being on board at all. Vainly he had tried to foist me on to another ship, but most had already sailed. The *Adelaide* agents thought that as she was so beautifully fitted out *Herzogin* was bound to take a woman. But the Captain had had enough of women, especially on the long hard voyage round the Horn. They were an alien irruption in his masculine world. If they got sick he had to look after them. If they fell in love he had to tidy up the consequences so that the well-being of the ship was unimpaired. If they got bored, it was worse, because they concocted all sorts of mischief. In his experience they invariably did one, two or all three of these things. He had vowed never to allow another woman on a long passage, never even to be lured into the delusion that they might be good company for him, very alone as he necessarily was on his skipper's peak. Never. Never. *Herzogin* herself was all too female, full of tricks and moods, absorbing enough for him.

Yet here, on a Good Friday afternoon, with that abominable steward, Felix, just recovering from a bout of booze, and his wife Elna, useless in her bunk after the drunken beating he had given her, here was yet another of them.

I sensed nothing of this, but I did sense a certain formality in the occasion. So I hastened to change into my only clean garment, a pair of white silk pyjamas made by a Chinese tailor in Tahiti and *de rigueur* there for better occasions—but not *de rigueur* here. However, that could not be helped. I had not expected *Herzogin Cecilie* to be run like a yacht.

A knock and a muffled bidding, and I encountered Felix for the first time. The only thing that was yacht-like about him was that

he was in spotless white. He loomed above tall me, raw-boned, with a boxer's crooked face, now bleakly wrinkled from the hangover. There were little lights in his icicle slits of eyes.

"*Kaffe*," he said, "*På däck, kaptenen bjuder på kaffe*. Please kom."

The Captain got up from a cane chair under the awning. He too was now in white, a resplendent tropical uniform, with braided epaulettes and brass buttons. A magnificent cap with a glittering peak lay on a bench. The very sight of him terrified me. He was now the most aristocratic and formal being I had ever laid eyes on, not excluding the King of England, before whom I had made my presentation bow. No one—and I had at one time consorted with a minor princeling or two—had ever treated me with the exquisite courtesy with which he waved me to a chair and bade the steward serve coffee. This came steaming out of the spout of a little copper coffee kettle nesting on a copper ring. I exclaimed how pretty it was, trying to break the formality of the moment.

"In Finland every home has its copper coffee kettle," said the captain.

How should I then have known that this was the voice of the bronze age speaking? While I write I can reach out and touch that very copper coffee kettle. *Herzogin* is gone; *Sven* is gone; I too am ready to weigh anchor at any moment; but the copper coffee kettle persists.

"I am of the earth, earthy," it says. "Round me has gathered warmth, comfort and love. I have glowed in the midst of many a circle of friends. I have watched joy and sorrow, despair and ecstasy from my tray, from my corner of the stove. I have poured out a welcome to frozen hearts. I have made the old feel young and the young wise. I have blinked cheerfulness in the night watches. I have brewed a last draught for the dying. Children have laughed at their funny faces in my burnished sides. Round me is a human home."

It was coffee that Felix poured out of that kettle, but what he brewed it with Neptune alone knows. Perhaps plain sea-water,

for which I have considerable respect as a magic potion. I drank, disliking the taste of tinned milk, and Sven drank. Without being consciously aware of it, and indeed feeling slight hostility and fear towards each other, we were deep into Kormt and Ermt and wading to the top of the shimmering bridge—but at that time I knew nothing and cared less about copper coffee kettles and their significance; and as for magic potions, if I could have found one to turn me into a man and a sailor—I would have drunk it!

IV

1934—One Hundred and Twenty Days

THAT voyage lasted one hundred and twenty days. We might have been cruising in outer space for all we saw of man and his works. Land showed itself once as a moonlit phantom that slid by as rapidly as a cloud shadow—the Antipodes, breeding-ground of albatross, they said. After some three months we saw a tramp steamer. It smudged quarter of an hour in a pearl-like day, and was of no significance. The continents themselves seemed mere figments, until the stench of the land hit us in the mouth of the English Channel. Paik scented it first and cocked his ears.

"Phfff," said the mate, "England hasn't cleaned her teeth lately."

It had not taken me long to get round *Förste*. In Wallaroo on sailing day I had watched him pat his girl consolingly on the shoulder, hardly concealing his impatience to be off. Later he talked to me about "the unnatural life ashore. Eat too much, drink too much, too late up at night. I get so tired."

Perhaps that was why he never took my advice to go to Hollywood. Just into his thirties he was a film fan's day dream. His taut lank body and handsome photogenic skull, his easy swaggering movements and expressive gestures, his growl and grin and the way you could always tell what he was thinking by his posture, made him a dramatic figure whatever he was doing.

He quizzed me with an acid glance when I first asked him for a job. It was the second day out and all he knew of me was a crouched and humbled figure squatting on the after-hatch, livid with sea-sickness but dutifully downing the raw salted tomatoes which the skipper had placed before me. I had seen his grin when the skipper said "Eat or starve." Thinking to quell me he sent me down to the forward hold to oil wire with fish oil. The aroma of the six pigs under the fo'c'sle head added to the atmosphere.

I oiled wire as Anders the bosun of *Thermopylae* had taught me, and the two German boys set to the same task joked heartily until they observed that I was doing it rather better than they did. Then he sent me up into the fore-rigging to overhaul buntlines. After this come rapid entries in my diary: "Heaving up stinking water out of the forepeak—long splicing in the forehold—with sailmaker under the poop—my knife soon blunt with ripping the twine stitches, and my shirt wet with sweat. The work in the half-light is exhausting and the canvas, even when old, cruel on the fingers—at the windlass all day, chipping. It is a work of art that seems to fill my whole life. . . ."

Förste opened out when he saw that I was, as he said a genuine case. "You better come on the port watch," he said, "it's much more exciting." So began a friendship that has withstood years of parting and few letters.

Förste could talk the hind leg off a donkey—but so could I—and sometimes, in those long night watches when there was nothing to do we used to begin on the front legs as well. He knew a great deal about a great number of odd things, from the methods of Phoenician tin miners to what went on in the brains of new apprentices. I still remember some of his clinches.

"To hell with Hell! How can it exist!" Of Hitler (and this was 1934): "I always feel there's something wrong going on behind that little moustache."

The skipper often joined in these fervid discussions. He took mischievous pleasure in stirring us both up to further heights

of rhetoric and gesture. One day the argument was raging round Napoleon. We three were standing in the lee of the starboard lifeboat just above the second mate's cabin. When the mate joined the skipper and flatly contradicted my most precious opinion I lost my temper and stamped with fury on the deck. In a jiffy the second was beside us, struggling into his coat.

"*Kapten?*" he inquired, bewildered.

I then learnt that a stamp was the emergency summons which brought a mate off watch on deck.

Another time, in fine clear weather with a steady breeze just aft of beam, we were in the chartroom, *Förste* and I, he writing up the log, but continuing some fierce discussion which had begun on deck. We both grew heated and at the height of the argument my flailing arm struck the barometer. Down it came, crash on to the deck. When we picked it up it had dropped ominously and now registered 'Storm'. At that moment we heard the skipper coming up, and hastily replaced it on its hook. As usual he made a few inquiries, looked at the barometer, which now showed a tremendous fall since the last watch, tapped it, and after a glance at the weather, quietly went and lay down in the office, first putting his boots and oilskins where they would be handy.

Neither of us dared confess. After thirty-six hours the barometer seemed to recover from the shock. Only then did the skipper, looking bewildered, relinquish his "heavy weather expected" routine in the face of continued fine weather.

The mate was easy to conquer. Not so Paik. His Alsatian heart was locked in love for his master, whose shadow he was. Fierce, faithful and wolf-like, he had for the skipper the same passion that the skipper had for the ship.

The second, at whose heels I often tagged those first days on various tasks, was an ideal ship's officer. He was conscientious, alert, and got the most work out of the crew with the least fuss. He slept when he should, had always time to eat, to wash his clothes, to spruce himself and his cabin. He had sparkling blue eyes, spare pink cheeks, and a determination to get on in the

seafaring world. At the end of the trip he went ashore and took his master's ticket. He remained a stranger to me, but it was he who finally gave me the baptism into *Herzogin's* congregation.

It was a starless, moonless night and blowing hard. I was on watch then. The main upper-gallant had blown out and both watches were on deck taking in sail. It was cold, wet and blind dark, with the wind shrieking a banshee chorus in the rigging. Boys from both watches were fumbling round the mainmast for invisible ropes. I was among a bunch whose leader had found something at which we were happily heaving when in among us darted a hissing shadow.

"*Satana perrrrkile—satanasatana . . .*"

The second cuffed and kicked and swore his way among us to the belaying pins. I got both my cuff and my kick. They were sweeter to me than any honeyed words, but afterwards I never could get out of him whether he knew it was me, or not. His eyes sparkled, he smiled enigmatically, and he blushed. Years later, when we used to pay our ceremonial annual visit to his mother and drink coffee under her cherry trees, I could still see him standing there, altogether an admirable person, not answering me. But he was dead then, knifed because he tried to stop a drunken fight in Buenos Ayres. . . .

The third was stubby, neither boy nor man, and very pleased to be third mate in *Herzogin*. He had neither grace nor looks and his English didn't run to much more than one distinct phrase.

"Dat's te vay to kill te pik."

We all called him Mopsy. He was too newly out of the fo'c'sle himself to command much authority. He seemed glad when the trade winds came and he was off watch and in charge of the day-men, whom he slave-drove to get the ship spick and span for Europe. The captain teased him amiably about his appetite, vowing to weigh him before and after a trip. One of the standing jokes was that Gusta made his seamen pay for an increase of weight on a voyage. The third giggled uncomfortably, but stuffed in more salt pork.

We all gave parties from time to time. The third was not to be outdone. He had a birthday and his first thought was to entertain the entire crew on two bottles of sour Portuguese wine he had bought from the skipper, very cheap. He consulted me first and I saw how much he longed to give a party that all his guests would enjoy. After all, in spite of being Mopsy, he was the third mate of *Herzogin Cecilie*, a vessel whose hospitality was a by-word in many a port.

I managed to concoct a soggy cake of rye flour and prunes, unearthed a bottle of sparkling burgundy and some biscuits and a little dish with more prunes, about which the skipper made coarse jokes. The third's eyes were sparkling and his clean shirt and trousers and ritualistic movements as he poured out the booze showed how aware he was of the dignity of the occasion.

The feast was spread in the tiny smoking-room in the chart-house and we all sat talking as one must talk after three months at sea, of things in general. The mixture of sauterne (from the skipper), the Portuguese stuff, and the burgundy was poured down with many a *skål*, and the edibles, even the prunes, disappeared miraculously. Mopsy glowed with hospitality and that was the main thing.

The third used to play his fiddle, home-made, for ten minutes in the evening before retiring. He took it to bits when someone suggested that the rats might have built a nest in it, and solemnly said "No", when he found that they had not. However, the overhaul seemed to improve it and his playing also improved during the trip. So did the fiddler himself and went on improving in his stubby way. When war came he was the master of the beautiful little three-masted barque *Killoran*. From the conning tower of a German submarine he had to watch her being sunk by gunfire. His heartbreak was still clear on his face when he told us this, stamping in the snow at a street corner in Mariehamn.

He hated the Germans, if only for this. Caught by them, while master of a Finnish steamer in Norwegian waters, he managed to knock the German guards overboard and make a reckless dash

through minefields to a Swedish port. Not for nothing was his favourite English phrase, "Dat's te vay te kill te pik". Frankly, I always had a soft spot for him, first as third, then as second, and finally as a fellow Ålänning: but he drove the crew too hard and irritably and few of them liked him.

Also of our company aft was the canary, an irascible Harz mountain roller, who fluttered his muck all over the saloon in impatience for his daily bath. Everyone looked after him most tenderly. The heating was put on because the canary too looked cold.

"Perhaps he'll start to sing," *Förste* said hopefully, but in the gloom of the roaring forties and the bitter fifties the bird remained dumb. At the first gleam of sunshine, the first breath of tepid air off the Falklands the canary was hung on deck in a sheltered spot. Later, in the doldrums, he escaped, and proved an uncatchable Peter Pan in the rigging. When he flopped exhausted into the sea *Förste* jumped in fully clad, reckless of sharks, and rescued him. Sailors are queer people.

But I was queer, too. I wrote in my diary—"To watch the world lighten and the sun heave up slowly above the horizon of the cold sea, to keep look-out on the fo'c'sle head with dolphins scudding under her heel, their white bellies turned in frolic to the dawn light, to stand in the icy draught underneath the billowing crojick, safe in that narrow black shadow from the flooding moonlight, these are the things worth living for. I can't imagine what life will be without them."

At twenty-five the icy draught under the crojick was a queer substitute for a man, a home and babies. Queer. Queer. But no queerer than the skipper, young, good-looking, charming when he liked to be, treating a mere ship as if she was his *inamorata*.

We got on famously because we were two people who had renounced many of the conventional joys of life. We both thought we knew what we wanted. The copper kettle could glow its family welcome for others, but not for us.

When your life's web has been intricately woven with

another's for twenty years, when you have realized that 'husband' and 'wife' are poor terms for the relationship between you, when you have become aware that your life together for those twenty years was only one small visible part of a timeless pattern, when you can shake your head at that childish phrase in the Christian marriage service 'till death do us part', the first threads of that visible detail of pattern appear frail as gossamer.

On the first day of that voyage 'the Captain without his shore manners was a less awesome being'.

On sailing day itself when, 'without sail set the wind blew us from the jetty and then under foresail only we drifted out to anchor three miles from shore, company was aboard for dinner. Eriksson very gay with the prospect of a fair wind down the gulf—actually we could not return on board till 11 p.m. when the fresh wind had died, there being endless difficulties. Nobody sends their bills till the last minute and the agents seem a stupid lot. The Captain in exasperation threatened to retire to the 'Preence of Vales' and get drunk, but instead we had a quiet tea at the Gunters with Captain Lille of the three-masted barque *Favell* and at last were back in the ship and away. Though dog-tired and full of too many *skåls* which had increased the ache in my jaw I had to stay up to see the sails blossom. A never-to-be-forgotten moment—the first square-sails I have ever seen on a yard. The moon nebulous, the orders sonorous like gongs, the men swift and steady, the lantern on the mizzen hatch glowing softly, a few spots of rain in the air. Imperceptibly we gathered speed, not much, but musical, with water lapping along her sides and a new stay-sail beating a tom-tom rhythm. The captain is everywhere, observing this and that, with Paik religiously at his heels, tail a-wag. . . .

'Half an hour's chat with Eriksson in the chartroom before turning in. . . .

'The Captain, whose hobby is the ship, proposes to put moon-sails on her. He already has an extra large mizzen stay-sail, a double gaff on her spanker and other innovations. I guess that

in his secret heart he wants to make her as like a clipper ship as possible. . . .

'Blue skies and light southerly, which displeases *Herr Kapten*. I knocked off after tea and was invited by that augustness to listen to the wireless, one of the last days it will be in range. Everything but the caterwauling of an electric storm inaudible, but we exchanged some views and experiences.'

Then came a Saturday and Sunday, with leisure from rust-chipping, coal-carrying, heaving and hauling and my thrilling excursions into the rigging. We spent the greater part of the day talking. On Sunday the mate too lounged on the hatch and they talked of Mariehamn and the gay times they had had there in navigation school.

'Both he and the mate have the easy and abandoned laughs of schoolboys. Off-duty anything will make them laugh, but a certain amount of exasperation is needed to make them swear. Only when a boy fumbles does either of them bellow. Then you can hear the roar from one end of the ship to the other.'

We still had encountered no heavy weather and I was lulled into writing this—'With every intention of finishing chipping the fo'c'sle pump after breakfast I found myself lounging with the Captain on the rudder box, unsuccessfully catching albatross. He has the gift of lounging. I notice that everyone on board is unhurried. There is always time to finish the most trivial conversation. Anything of any interest is discussed fervidly. It is a wonderful feeling. I am slowly getting it myself. We laugh about the least thing, and curse the fine calm weather half-heartedly, for it really is lovely for lounging. Cape pigeons were around the ship this day and Mother Carey's chickens. The albatross sat lazily on the water, too torpid even to bite.'

'"The seely birds! The seely fewls," murmurs Eriksson. He has been captain of *Herzogin Cecilie* since he was twenty-five—his first ship as master, and he was mate in her for ten months before. He loves her. His voice is quite different when he speaks about her. . . .'

After the night when she was taken aback and lost most of her sails and lay at the mercy of the sea, the flow of words between the skipper and myself continued in an ever-mounting flood. We soon knew far more of each others' past lives than many a couple five years married; but what we said was of less significance than what we left unsaid.

I began to have the eerie feeling that the skipper was so much part of the elements around him that he was something more than a man; part of him was the wind, part of him was the sky, part of him was the ship, part of him was akin even with all the creatures of the sea, the whales that blew a wraith of vapour, the lithe and jolly dolphins, the tireless albatross. He was something bigger than the rest of us though his outline was more shadowy.

I scribbled along in the diary—'The powers of darkness walk the deck to-night. Rough scuddies of rain finger one's face and hands. I feel I want to stay near someone who knows about these things and stick to Sven, running occasional errands between him, sitting in the chartroom pretending to read, and the mate, glued to the steering compass. This strong northerly may in a few seconds change to a southerly, with extra heavy rain as the only warning.'

Though we were on such good terms I never presumed one jot on them. I never entered his beautiful, maple-panelled quarters where there were comfortable arm-chairs, pleasant conversation and the ceremonial glass of wine, without invitation. This I usually got, but he was an inveterate tease and sometimes kept me to my self-imposed sailor's life when I was heartily sick of it.

We were scraping teak under the vigilant eye of Mopsy. A drizzle and a bitter breeze and the worst position at the standard compass had reduced me to a frozen automaton. Impossible to fish out the five-day-old handkerchief from under my oilskins, so I let the drip drip—or be blown away. At midday Sven, clean and snug in his white sweater, as cosy as could be, appeared to take the sight. With all my being I willed him to ask me in for a drink, but the sun being coy, he spent a quarter of an hour

twiddling his sextant, oblivious of telepathy. When he disappeared into the chartroom I gave up hope, with only one last mental effort to draw him out, and resigned myself miserably to the next hour, feeling I was as near to seeing eye to eye with the crew as I ever would be.

The scrapers were blunt. The rain had weakened the caustic. All the easy surfaces were finished. My hand was bleeding from a chafed cut. My nose was dripping. My oilskins were frigidly sweating. My boots were leaking. Everything was supremely horrible; but nothing would induce me to knock off on my own. Dickenson, equally miserable beside me, gave me a nudge.

"If I were you I'd knock off and go in," he said, in his cultured English voice. "Mopsy can't row *you*."

But I scraped and sniffed on. Suddenly in that inhuman voice he used to the crew, Sven said behind me,

"You can knock off now, Nils."

I walked with dignity to the chartroom and then dashed below. The mate was blue about the gills, too, with a bad chill and salt-water boils. I would brew a hot toddy from my little private store and share it with him and we would be poor things together. Damn the skipper!

But the cupboard was bare. There were a few forlorn drops of whisky at the bottom of the bottle and the gin was all gone. It had been stolen.

Hence rose the biggest shindy we had on board that trip, for to steal anything, worst of all drink, was the forbidden sin. The cold fury with which Sven and the mate tackled Felix the steward, whose sudden berserk state was obviously connected with the disappearance of my booze, made me gape. They pummelled him into submission and locked him in his cabin.

The skipper did not have much patience with anyone who caused trouble, either among the crew or the passengers. He was in charge of the well-being of the ship, and on these long passages with people penned in by the relentless monotony of the sea, there were certain rules that had to be enforced, for a small row could

quickly develop into a disastrous one. He had once put an obstreperous passenger in irons, and more than once one of the crew.

After we rounded the Horn the weather swiftly became warmer, and once we reached the south-east trade to be on watch was dull. Sometime this voyage would come to an end, I said to myself. I would have to snap out of this masquerade and think of my purse that would be so very nearly empty when we reached England. I was a journalist. I had specialized in the sea and seafarers and after two years wandering about the South Seas, New Zealand and Australia, I had rich material: galleries of seafarers from Jovesi on his outrigger to Sven Eriksson in his four-masted barque. I must get them into focus and put them on paper and sell them for hard cash and fill my purse.

I lay in my bunk with these grim thoughts and tried to remember what life in London had been like, at Oxford, and later in Cape Town as the gossip girl who wove her snobby threads from the futile capers of the futile few.

The porthole was open. All night many whales had been playing in the moonlight round the ship. I could still hear the sighs of one of them as he scraped along the plates just below the porthole. This beautiful magic world must somehow be got on paper—but I felt it was a sacrilege, if it could be achieved. I know now that it cannot be, has never been—for the art of Masefield and Conrad is the art of words and only music can embody the soul of the sea.

Once I stopped regular seamen's work there were a thousand things to do besides writing—and Sven Eriksson wouldn't stay in focus.

He always had a store of odd jobs to occupy himself and he inveigled me to join him. We gossiped and squabbled amicably over mending the speaking tube, replanting his ferns, and methods to be employed to make the hens lay more than one egg a day. No small task was too trivial to challenge all the skipper's meticulous skill. I had never before realized the pleasure that could be got out of doing some small thing really well.

Then he and the mate suddenly turned themselves into carpenters and started alterations that involved a new skylight and a lounge for future passengers—"so that I don't have to ask them in here," said the skipper, cruelly smiling as we munched the last of the Australian biscuits in his saloon.

Between carpentering the skipper ground into me the elements of navigation, abetted by the mate, until I could vie with them in working out the ship's position. Sudden female urges would send me into the galley where I concocted pies out of withered Australian apples and dried Tahitian bananas I had brought with me from that isle of delight. The skipper ate them and the mates ate them, and though they beat their breasts with indigestion, they all seemed glad that Nils did have some female urges.

All this time I was much intrigued by the one person with whom I had never spoken. Not that I felt any longing for female society, though the steward's wife, Elna, seemed to, for she spent much time musing over the hens, the only other female company on board.

The Duchess Cecilie could hardly be called beautiful. She had not cleaned her face, tidied her hair, or even washed her ears for fifteen years. Her complexion was definitely bad, her nose snub, her eyes insignificant and her mouth colourless. But for all that she was a brave and fascinating lady. In all the seven seas she was the first to meet the dangers of the way, and always she had some thirty men in her train, adoring her, cursing her, admiring her, but never pitying her as plain. She remained aloof from them all. Her lot was to be envied by other women.

Though already a woman in her early thirties and approaching the dilapidated age, she cared nothing for her appearance—or seemed not to. Perhaps she was too proud. Her carelessness worried me for many weeks of storm and breeze. I used to peer at her plump profile just visible where she hid under the jib-boom, sometimes in danger of finding myself dropping to death among her foamy petticoats.

One day it seemed to me that she had changed. In the fierce

westerly weather of the South Pacific, she had thrust her breast against the waves triumphantly. Round the Horn she had glided in obscurity above the starlit sea, serene; but then she changed.

I noticed it first at crack of dawn off the Falklands, when the first hint of warm weather ahead was in the air. A fair fresh wind lifted the great foresail bellying against the forestay, and seemed to lift the bows, too, so that the light of dawn fell full on the Duchess Cecilie, and revealed the sad fatalism with which she contemplated the cold vastness of the dawn. For the first time I felt sorry for her.

The Skipper and *Förste* had been discussing the best and quickest ways of smartening the ship for her arrival in Europe. I had heard them talk of masts and yards and teak and deck, but not of the Duchess.

"Aren't you going to make her grand too?" I asked *Förste*, who was on the fo'c'sle head at that moment.

"Oh, she'll get painted when we do the outside," he replied. "But it doesn't matter much about her. She doesn't rust. She's wood."

At that I saw her lip curl, or did she bite it? I felt another wave of compassion for her.

Förste said I could mess about with her if I liked.

"Better wait until the warmer weather comes, though," he added, "there's the hell of a draught down there now."

I had no idea how I should reach the aristocratic lady, for there was nothing below her, and I did not intend to hang by my heels from the jib-boom. But I left it to *Förste* and trusted that his ideas would not be too perilous.

As the weather grew warmer fancies busied themselves in my head. The colour of her dress—should it match her eyes? Complexion—perhaps olive—perhaps silver and mask-like. But she was such a German housewife in spite of being a Duchess. No good to make her exotic. I longed for the day when I should look into her eyes and find out what sort of a person she was.

At last the day came. *Förste* put Mopsy in charge of the scaffold-

ing—so I called it in the hopes that it would be worthy of the name. My hopes were doomed. When I arrived on the fo'c'sle head, the third was jumping up and down on a meagre plank swung alongside the Duchess from the jackstays. The breeze was freshening and the ship, sailing six points off the wind, was curt-seying and swaying in a beam sea.

"It's good and stronk," shouted Mopsy, hanging on with one hand while he scraped paint off with the other, "but don' foll in, Nils. Too long swim to Falmouth. Dat's te vay to kill te pik!" he added inconsequently, giving one more caracole.

I was used to yawning voids, sawing yards, and swinging footropes, but not to insecure planks swaying above the rushing water. Slowly I swung myself down and edged along the plank, fear clutching at my swinging heels. When I reached the end I looked up. There was the Duchess.

I could have cried with disgust. She was not only plain, she was hideous. No paint could alter her obese ugliness, I thought. Long I gazed at her, trying to be sympathetic. Then it began to dawn on me that she wore a mask. This grotesque, pock-marked countenance was not that of the Duchess Cecilie. I felt for my knife and drove it as hard as I could into her pitted cheek. It sank deep. The flesh cracked and a thick wad of paint fell and was swallowed up by the sea, exposing the brown smoothness of a wooden cheek. Like an excavator on the verge of discovery, I set to work feverishly. Soon her neck was free of paint and a throat of delicate maturity revealed. Four hours later the steward leant anxiously over the rail.

"You want lunch, miss?" he inquired.

I did not, but I left her. It was a chance to scold the skipper and the mates for neglecting a pretty woman. Most unsailorlike.

There were no less than fifteen coats of paint on that unfortunate creature—yet she was obviously a good and chaste woman. The first layer was gold leaf, still glittering, a relic of the days when *Herzogin* was a German training ship. The Norddeutscher Lloyd Line could afford such extravagances.

Day after day I swung there beside the Duchess until her whole head was uncovered. Below us dolphins sometimes rushed, but more often porpoises, their spear-like beaks abreast of the stem, sported for our delight. They were the great lady's courtiers.

The Duchess had small, shell-like ears with which she listened to the humming of the rigging, large, limpid eyes with which she gazed out upon the eternal horizon, a humorous tip-tilted nose which she hid from the men on deck as too revealing a sign of her character, a mouth whose sweetness and wisdom beguiled the waves to yield to her. This mouth I painted dark red. When the paint was still wet someone must have stolen down in the night and kissed her roundly, for I found the mark of other lips in the morning. Oh naughty Duchess!

I grew familiar with all her little tricks, and sometimes reproved her as one girl to another. She resented nothing except to be approached from the lee side when the ship was sailing into the wind. Then, just as I stretched out to caress her with my paint brush, she would jib away like a wilful society woman being dressed by her maid. After I had painted her face she seemed more pleased with me. The faint flush in her olive cheeks was to her liking. Her blue eyes were bluer than the sea, of which her draperies were a darkling echo. In her breast nestled the blue and yellow flag of Åland, her adopted home. Gold combs decked her raven hair, which was tied back in a trim queue by orange ribbons. She melted into the ship's slim stem in a turmoil of yellow and black scroll-work, grouped round the flag of Finland to port and round the flag of Sweden to starboard. Thus everyone's race nationality and patriotism was satisfied, for Åland was one of those uncomfortable places that owed their status to the League of Nations.

She was my girl, and I was proud of her. The skipper and the mates were sceptical about her. At every meal her new elegance was dinned into them, but they were not allowed to see her till she was ready to enter the ballroom.

The skipper had sober tastes. He preferred greys and browns

for the ship. His fancy flew no higher than sky blue for the inside of the ventilators. From his photographs and conversation I guessed that he preferred quiet and even mouse-like women. The moment when he must see the now-blooming Duchess began to give me severe qualms. *Förste's* tastes seemed more gaudy, but still—her brilliant blue dress, her orange ribbons!

At last she was finished. I was under the jib-boom as soon as the sun came up. A shoal of bonito were making merry in the bow wave. When the ship snored into a glassy swell, the glitter from the Duchess could be seen reflected in the water, before foam tumbled ahead of the stern. To me she seemed very beautiful, but I knew I was infatuated. I visited the galley before breakfast, just to make sure the cook was giving the skipper a meal to his liking. After breakfast I hoped to introduce him to the lady.

It was a comfort to realize that the skipper, too, was nervous. "Two women have put their heads together. Mischief must ensue," seemed to be his attitude. On the fo'c'sle head he looked with disapproval at the five drops of paint which I had forgotten to scrape off the deck. Then he peered over the rail.

The blue and orange must have struck him like a bomb. He said nothing. I crept away and hid behind the capstan. Very slowly the skipper climbed over the railing, let himself down on the plank, and walked out under the jib-boom. When he reached the limit he turned round and looked the Duchess in the face, staring into her blue eyes with his very large grey ones.

I felt sick with misgiving. Without a word he stretched out his hand and stroked her tawny cheek, his face lighted, he patted her head, swung to the side for a better view, and went on looking at her. The truth burst blissfully upon me. He liked her.

However, he said never a word to me, except, "The paint's a bit thick."

I rushed away to find *Förste*, and when that young man was introduced there was no doubt about his approval. He stayed to flirt with her for half an hour.

"Didn't you like her?" I asked the skipper nervously when invited in for a drink to celebrate the end of my task.

"You did her beautifully," he said, "She's more beautiful than she has ever been. But look at yourself! Nils, what seems to give you real joy is to be feelthy dirty as a *skogs Finn*. Your legs, your arms, your ter-r-r-ible short hair, all covered with muck and paint!"

"It's dry and it's not coming off on your blasted sofa," I said, "and what the hell do you want me to be, anyway? Greta Garbo, specially materialized for your entertainment when you feel like company?"

"There isn't a damn thing I haven't told you about myself, and you've told me the story of your life, both above and below board and very interesting it was, too! You know what I am like, and I know what you're like. So don't expect me to behave like those streams of soupy women all prinking up for a flirtation with the great windjammer captain! Clean myself up just to come and have a drink with you?—Phhhhhhhh!"

He had indeed trodden on the forbidden toe, and I fizzed off, trying to stamp on all of his.

I got up and prowled about the saloon, giving him further hell. Paik looked anxiously at his master and began to growl. I marched out and up on deck slap into the mate, who cocked an eyebrow at me and handing me a scraper told me that there was a job behind the charthouse if I wanted it.

From where I was working I couldn't resist peeping down through the open skylight. There was the skipper, my poor dear Sven, sitting like a sphinx in his arm-chair, reading a book. I edged round farther and saw that the book was upside down.

There was a bucket of "feelthy" water used for teak washing standing near. A horrid impulse made me seize it and hurl its "feelthiness" with considerable accuracy over his august head.

"Irons for me!" I thought as I leaped and scrambled round the charthouse like a hunted rabbit, but it turned out to be the old-fashioned spanking I should have had ten years before.

It hurt, and I yelled, not caring if the whole crew were agog, and then, though the slaps still rained on my upturned bottom, I began to laugh—and laugh. Before he had finished Sven had begun to shake with laughter, too. But he stood sternly over me while I wiped up the mess in the saloon.

The beautiful saloon, the throne room of *Herzogin Cecilie* which, in the end, we would have to prise from its setting, panel by panel, fitting by fitting, numbering each small bit, each cornice, each pilaster, so that it would stand one day, mummified and meaningless, the centre-piece in Åland's nautical museum. Not till I knew of Sven's early days at sea did I appreciate the satisfaction he must have got out of sitting there, king of it all.

When he had told me that his brother Nils had said that he'd never make a sailor I had understood how this awoke in him the ardent desire to be "the best sailor in the world"—to be quicker and stronger and more deft and daring than the ruck. How to do things well became a passion with him. He drove himself forward on the power of his marvellous zest for living fully the living moment. When he first entered *Herzogin's* captain's quarters as her master he was determined to learn to enjoy the comfort and dignity in daily life of which he had had so little.

He quickly acquired the knack of doing things in the right way—wines, cigars, food—and because he enjoyed making other people enjoy themselves he became a noted figure among the little group of Gustaf Erikson's masters.

"To be frozen to one's bunk, Nils," he said to me, trying to explain, "to see the rats swimming away from a ship you have to take to sea with the next fair wind; to feel so ill that you have to lie down on the deck before you can force yourself to go on; to be mate when your skipper goes below to drink and stays there drinking when his nerves have gone in a crisis; to live on rotten food with dirty companions and you wanting to be clean and not knowing where the lice are coming from; not to be able to trust the strength of an old ship with a skimpy owner and having to beat round the Horn in winter to Chile, weeks of it, storm and

headwinds, headwinds and ice, and wet, wet and cold, weeks and weeks of it, and then to lie out miles from shore loading by lighter and have perhaps only a few hours in a miserable dago town before the long trip home: I tell you, *Herzogin* in the wheat trade is a paradise, not only for me but for every one of her crew."

It was true. I felt humbled. What did I know of all the facets of a sailor's life, of the stern forces which had moulded this man and imbued him with such a lover's tenderness for his ship? He went on:

"She's a wonderful ship. There's not another left like her in the world, though *Pamir* and *Passat* are fine ships, too. You can press her and she keeps out of the water. Look at her down in the westerlies! What a sight! What a glorious feeling when she is running along like that! I could sail her and sail her and never be tired of it! Millionaires may talk of sport, and have their yachts and ocean racers, but none of them have ever had the joy out of them I have had of *Herzogin*!"

"It's true," I said. "You're richer than any millionaire!"

Years later, when we were ruefully discussing the state of our finances it was a comfort to know that riches did not lie in the fatness of one's bank balance, but in the power to love, to enjoy, and to exult in the doing of it.

Part Three

ALL THE WIDE OCEANS OF THE WORLD

V

Out of the Baltic—October 1935

HERZOGIN'S bridal wreath still stuck up scraggily on the fo'c'sle head as a benign breeze in the pale sunlight of nordic autumn wafted us into the southern Baltic, and she hummed and crooned to herself with all the happy noises a ship makes when she is sailing before a fair wind in calm water.

I wondered how the boys were feeling, so many of them straight from home. There was hardly a tough-looking youngster among the new ones and Sven and the mates anxiously eyed the little handful of more presentable bodies who had been signed on as A.B.s. They were not, however, any worse than usual at the beginning of a "*rund resa*" as a round trip was lightly called, this yearly Odyssey through a hundred degrees of latitude and over three hundred of longitude. But in a very short time they would have to be taught a very great deal, not only technical knowledge, but the much more difficult lessons of instant obedience, tireless energy, faith in their superiors and co-operation with their fellows. For reward at the end they would only have the satisfaction of knowing themselves numbered among the "good boys" of past voyages. Many of them, used to the soft ways of modern living, would think that they had had a very tough time.

To make up for the pandemonium of our departure, halcyon weather now blessed us. Hundreds of little land birds, sparrows, robins, finches and many other meadow varieties descended on us in a chirping flock and settled in the rigging and on deck with a proprietary air. They were uncommonly tame, and would only

hop just out of reach of a stroking finger, then turn to look at one with bright eyes. They were very noisy, and infuriated the canary who, of course, was brought on deck to look at them. When their spatter of droppings also became marked we were glad to see their departure, as sudden and unexplained as their arrival.

On this lovely day Sven strolled about the ship, his face impassive, betraying nothing of his thoughts. To most of the boys he was an unknown quantity, rather awesome because of his reputation. I sensed that there was an element in this new crew which did not believe in the legend of the skipper's discipline, and wondered what would happen when the inevitable show-down came. I soon knew.

We were approaching shallows and were soon picking up sea-marks both to port and starboard. The skipper stood amidships and the mate by the weather railing, eyes skinned, for the passage was very narrow. A tall, scruffy-looking youth was at the wheel, his cap cocked over his eyes, his face sullen, his mouth half open. He had been signed on as an A.B. There was something so casually insolent about him, that I wondered to myself what would happen to him, if he wasn't as good as his swagger.

The order came quick and sharp—

"Hard-a-port!"

Instead of springing to life like a mad tiger to get the great wheel over, he plucked away at it disdainfully as if it were a harp. In two strides the skipper was on him, flung him from the wheel and brought her over. When he had steadied her he motioned the boy back, and with an acid oath or two told him that an A.B. should know these things. Ten minutes passed, and then the order came again.

"Hard-a-starboard!"

It was horrible to see how the helmsman responded; he even deliberately dawdled to show his independence.

This time the mad tiger was there all right, but it was the skipper pouncing on that boy. The mate seized the wheel, while

Sven gave the boy the beating of his life. The boy fought back, snarling and screeching, and trying to draw his knife.

"That bloody Finn will be signed off in Copenhagen," said the skipper, dusting his trousers. "Hard-a-starboard means something in this ship."

Yet I had seen him standing patient and kindly beside a young sea-struck Australian, teaching him the art of steering as if he were his own son. It was as Sven himself had said to me, "The good men like me, the bad ones don't." The truth was that with good men his patience was boundless, with bad ones it cracked at the first strain.

What the crew thought of this incident I never knew. There were no more such scenes on board *Herzogin*, and the boys who gawked at the skipper fisting the Finn and his knife helped to sail her faster round the world on that route as far as I can ascertain, than any other ship has ever sailed, 79 days from Copenhagen to the Spencer's Gulf and 86 up to Falmouth.

Among them was a Frenchman. Long-nosed and oily-skinned, he was a little chap with the strut of a bantam cock who had paid his fifty pounds apprenticeship fee to Gusta for the privilege of sailing in *Herzogin's* fo'c'sle. The strut of a bantam cock had degenerated to the shuffle of a wet hen by the time we reached Copenhagen. There he came, beret in hand, with pleading eyes and shrugging shoulders.

"Monsieur le capitaine, it is too moch. I have te money. I will pay te passage. But te foksel—no, no—te boys—tey——!"

Heaven knows what pranks they had played on him but he was soon installed aft. Unfortunately he *had* the money. He also had a camera and some of the queerest habits. He liked a breakfast of sardines spread with marmalade and sprinkled with condensed milk. You could hear him relish every morsel of the loathsome stuff—and the stench which hung about him, ever more pungent and putrid as we neared the Line! It made eating in the mess with him an ordeal. The mates promised to find out how he acquired it, as this was beneath Sven's dignity, and they

feared that whatever it was might shock even my eyes. His recipe when discovered was quite simple. He left his dirty clothes to soak in a tub of sea water in the passengers' bathroom for a couple of weeks, and then hung them there dripping for another week to dry. The sweat was lacquered layer by layer on to them, and it was the maturing process which gave off such noxious fumes.

"Why don't you give him the wiggling you gave me for being so dirty?" I asked Sven.

"Pggght!" said Sven, "the mates better teach him how to wash his clothes. Besides I don't love *him*."

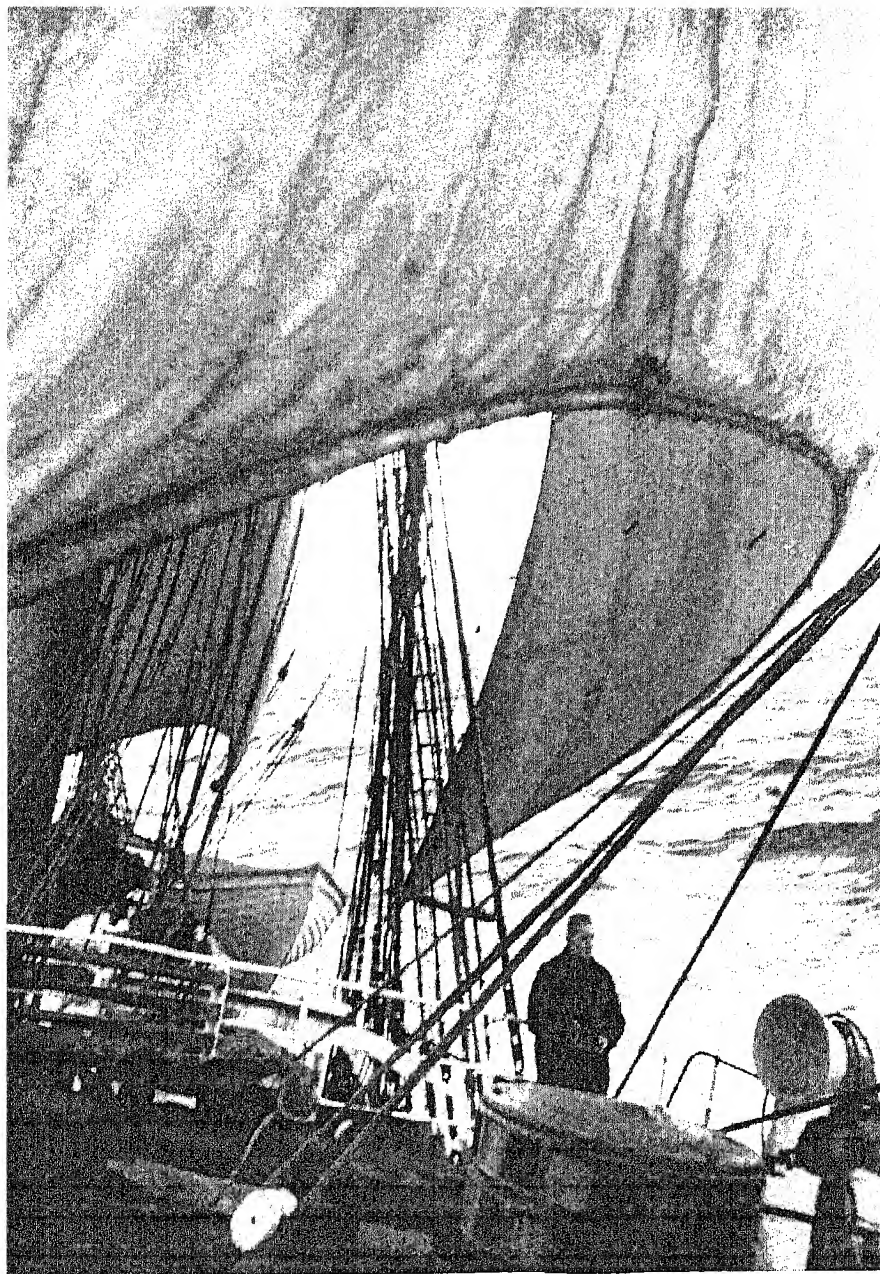
I didn't love him either. He called me "Madame" and usually added the rider, "Madame is so sportinnng!"

One of my dearest pastimes was to go for walks in the rigging, up to the royals if it was blowing a bit though not too hard, or out perhaps on the upper topsail yardarm to look down into the gush of the lee plowter and up to the clouds of canvas and away to the heaving sea rim. Then just as I was clambering down the weather shrouds, lost to every thought but the grandeur of the beauty of the loveliness of the harmony—there the little froggy would be, cockeyed, with his camera.

"Ah madame, I haf you! Smile little please. De so sportt-innng madame!"

If I hadn't been the Captain's wife and minding my p's and q's that Frenchman might have been grateful to return to the fo'c'sle.

He did a certain amount of work and occasionally stood a trick at the wheel. It was in the forties off the Cape that disaster overtook him. He spun the wheel, and then tried to slow it down by thrusting his arm through the spokes. We thought we heard his arm crack, and sure enough when he was fetched down into the saloon it was as limp as a dead duck's wing. But he had some guts. *Herzogin* was scudding along in a westerly squall, doing her sixteen knots and listing heavily with a joyful bucking motion of the tail. The mate and I held him as firmly as we could in all that



8. Sven on the fo'e'sle-head deck.



9 Sven with Park

10 Sven and *Forste*, Elis Karlson, taking a sight in the fitties



slither, and Sven set his arm and plastered it. Although his face was white, not a groan escaped him; but then he had a full glass of Sven's whisky inside him.

The mate carted him off to his bunk, and left him there to comfort himself. Froggy had made no pals. He was as alien in *Herzogin* as I would now have been at a debutante's tea party. I shuddered for his loneliness.

"Don't bother your head about him," Sven said. "Don't you realize most passengers are like that?"

"Then why on earth do they come?" I asked. "Look at that one you had last trip! *Förste* tells me she sat day in and day out, sewing sails, never did anything else, and seldom talked to anyone. The only way she tried to brighten your life was by giving you lists of all the different breeds of dairy cattle!"

"Then there was that man who had escaped from the lunatic asylum where he'd been shut up by his wife!"

"And the doctor who took drugs!"

"And the rich American woman who took all her clothes off and danced on the foredeck!"

Sven began to laugh. "And the girl with the paint stuck all over her and the terrible short hair—you know, the one who threw a bucket of fealthy water over me. What became of her, I wonder?"

"I can tell you," I said. "She went ashore and let her hair grow, and then when she was trying to get the paint off her legs she wondered what it would be like to be the second best wife in a harem because that's what she would be if she married the skipper with his blooming Duchess."

In port, however, the blooming Duchess had a habit of putting her head under her wing and snoozing off. Her talon-grip on Sven would then relax. Copenhagen was my first port as second-best wife.

Age-old stronghold of merchants and seafarers, it lay on the southern rim of the quiet sea, a wraith of silver and goldish grey, as we wafted in at sunset. The plunge of the anchors hardly

rippled the enchanted waters. Grunts and murmurs and muffled orders as everything was stowed and trimmed aloft died like a chorus of birds as night fell. A few staccato steps as the last of the boys ran to get their belated supper—and *Herzogin* was asleep. Where other barques lay swinging at anchor, lanterns began to wink.

This was their gathering place before the long ploy round the face of the earth, in ballast most of them, to the continent which still had a use for them, still welcomed them as old friends, still loved them for themselves and not for their rarity.

In Copenhagen they were also old friends and not fascinating freaks. For the skippers Copenhagen was as merry as a fair. They visited each other in a frenzy of sociability, to and fro in the chugging motor-boats between the ships, arriving to call on *Herzogin* at any time of the day or night, for it was quickly discovered that Sven's English wife was not nearly as much in the way as most wives are. She listened to tales of storms and fractious crews, maritime dilemmas, narrow shaves, lee shores, stevedores' iniquity and tricky freights, with a knowing expression. She didn't mind paying return visits and hearing it all over again, and she never sat like a thunder cloud in a motor-boat at the bottom of a jacob's ladder, sulking because her husband refused to make straight for the shops of Copenhagen.

It was the biggest sulk I had ever seen, this that enveloped Captain G.'s wife. All *Herzogin's* blandishments could not tempt her on board; neither Sven's dulcet courtesy, nor my stumbling expressions of welcome in carefully purged Swedish. At last Captain G. showed some spirit. Though he was obviously scared by his own mutiny he left her there, bobbing about in the motor-boat, and came up for a drink and a chat—rather a long one. He was sailing with the next fair wind and he and Sven had not met for several years.

We decided, when he finally said he should go, to come along with him to town. Our presence would be a measure of protection. I noticed on the way that water, air and conversation

seemed to freeze solid around us. It was Captain G.'s wife in full refrigeration.

Battened-down rage, humiliation, self-pity and disapproval of all skippers and their goings-on, as well as plain hate curtained her face, which was already overcast with a supreme sulkiness. Captain G.'s mutiny was soon over. He tagged after her to the shops.

"See what I mean by 'wives'," said Sven, as we made our way to the hotel where we were to meet the passengers. "They are not, God forbid, all like that, but the tendency is that way."

Among the passengers were two Englishmen, who had been allotted to Captain G. They were bubbling over with the anticipation of thrills—windjammers—round the world—the roaring forties—Cape Horn—captains courageous—the clichés sparkled in their eyes. When they heard that Captain G. would soon be arriving, and that his wife was with him, they consulted me. Heroic skipper—beautiful wife—parting soon—lonely wait—romantic situation—offer homage. I did not deter them from buying a huge bouquet of red roses to present to her. Please the captain, eh what?

Sven and I managed to witness the ceremony. The grotesque sight of Captain G.'s wife's face lowering above that armful of red roses, the symbols of romantic passion, made our blood run cold. When a few years later Captain G. disappeared at sea, presumably having jumped, the tragedy of maladjustment was complete.

Of the red roses Sven said, "What a waste. She is so cross, the silly woman, she will throw them into the sea. Think how nice they would be in *Herzogin's* saloon," and he eyed me with a look that said, one of the duties of my second best wife is to collect bouquets for the Duchess. I set about luring roses out of thrill-drunk Englishmen, and soon had the saloon with its vase or two—but they were yellow ones.

Not till I had sat drinking the glass of madeira that was a *kaptenskan's* due when she accompanied her husband to

Schierbeck's did I understand the warm tone Sven and every other skipper used when they talked about this old firm of ship chandlers. Their fathers and grandfathers had known Schierbeck's, and sat there in that mahogany and leather sanctum up the narrow stairs, gossiping and sipping a glass, while their orders were attended to. Nothing was so difficult that Schierbeck's could not fix it. There was always one of the family in attendance, suave, jolly, or sympathetic, as the occasion demanded. The clerks were discreetly veiled behind a carved wooden grill. In a corner stood a mahogany ship's wash-stand, with clean linen hand towels hanging beside it, for the captains often came here straight from ships lying out in the roads. Papers and nautical magazines lay on the round table. The atmosphere was friendly, leisured, old-fashioned but nevertheless businesslike.

About ten o'clock every morning, Schierbeck's club began to assemble. The little group of Erikson captains was uneasy, for several of the fleet had not yet arrived and would be beating about in the persistent storm which was now raging in the southern Baltic—no place for big sailing ships with new crews in such weather. At last, red-eyed, stiff with fatigue and almost voiceless, Linus Lindvall, the first of the belated skippers, joined them, his oilskins dripping all the way up Schierbeck's narrow stairs. He had a tale to tell of storm and head wind, a sick boy who had to be put ashore on Bornholm, narrow escapes from collision with steamers in fog, glimpses of other ships beating up and down in the same plight as himself, and finally the luck of a fair blow that slanted him into the Danish Sound. Warm and quiet, the welcome he got betrayed the depths of these men's anxiety. "*Skål!*" he said, and downed Schierbeck's beer in a cadence of relishing gulps. The presiding member of the Schierbeck family leant over the table, smiled benignly, and poured out another round.

Now was the moment for some captain to reach for his dispatch case and retreat to the order grill, there to draw forth neatly typed lists of mates' and stewards' requirements. At the back of

the dignified foolscap lurked grubby little bits of paper scribbled with jottings of forgotten items, for no mate or steward ever failed to rush after a captain at the last minute with a fumbled handful of these additions.

The necessities, dried peas, salt pork and beef, potatoes, meal, beans, sugar, were easily disposed of. Every captain wanted to have a moderate provision bill, for Gusta was alert about this, but nearly every captain wanted his steward to produce delicacies if the occasion demanded, at Christmas, or New Year, or Crossing the Line. Schierbeck hovered over the decision while the captain pondered the merits of tinned lobster and tinned crab. Patient as the sphinx, the Schierbeck in charge neither advised nor urged, but as soon as the captain's voice softened over tinned crab, tinned crab was written down. To my thinking crab and lobster were mere courtesy titles, the taste of both being only vaguely crustacean but most definitely tinned.

It was no mean feat to fit out one of the ships for the round trip. Freight in the thirties were under thirty shillings a ton, and few vessels sailed from Europe except in ballast. Though fresh beef in England was fourpence a pound and butter tenpence, the Finnish mark had a poor rating in sterling. Everything was bought where it was best at the cheapest. Rope, canvas and paint, which the owner never begrudged any ship, were bought in England, but most of the provisioning for ships that sailed from the Baltic was done in Denmark. During the trip to Australia, reckoned at three to four months, each ship had to be self-contained. One of the master's most hair-raising duties was to be sure that everything, down to the last box of matches, was ordered and on board before she sailed.

Sven took a delight in this. He planned the whole life of the ship for ten months ahead, from how many new sails she would require to the renewal of the lampshade in the second-best passenger cabin. If he did forget some item he would be sure to find it or a substitute in what he called his "*yunk*"—various cupboards, drawers and chests in which he stowed articles as varied

as bits of pink satin ribbon, broken false teeth, used cartridge cases and wads of tracts. If even a search in these failed he was not at a loss, but pounced on some white elephant, conjured it into a white rabbit, and after putting it several times into his mental top hat, produced the required object, or something that could easily be mistaken for it.

Gustaf Erikson's skippers were a set of men impressive in their diversity. Fat and thin, tall and short, dark and fair, young and old (though none above middle age), talkative and silent, loud-voiced and soft-voiced—after I had met most of them I wondered whether they had any common denominator apart from their Åland blood.

There was Nisse Erikson, the owner's nephew, over six feet of rotund body surmounted by a completely bald and spherical head, on which was imprinted a very jovial pink face with a snub nose. Geniality and love of life's good things oozed from him. He never seemed to take anything seriously except his food. As a dog hunts a rat he had a talent for nosing out the choicest dish at the cheapest restaurant.

It was fun to pay him a visit in *L'Avenir*, a barque as smart though not as strong as *Herzogin*, and find that he was Sven's oldest crony. Only once in his life had he been thin, and that was when, as master and mate, they had together sailed a timber schooner into Cuxhaven with her hull under water.

On the owner's insistence (it was in Gustaf's early days) much more had been crammed into her than she had strength for. At the first touch of bad weather in the North Sea her seams had opened and she had settled till her decks were awash, afloat only on her cargo. Food and clothes were lost, but not their determination to sail her into port. They managed to rig the wheel and the tackle so that she was navigable, lashing themselves in the rigging at night when the weather worsened.

"Baltic Jews!" shouted the Norwegians who spied them (a tempting morsel), offered salvage, and were refused. Out of spite they would only give them some old lifeboat provisions.

"At the last," said Sven, "when we had been going on like this for several days, Nisse began to jibber about his sins and what an awful judgment those Norwegian lifeboat provisions were on him. He moaned and prayed and lost flesh by the hour. You should have seen him run up that beach at Cuxhaven, keeping his trousers up with rope-yarn till he could get to the nearest restaurant!"

A very different type was the sedate Captain Mörn, whom we visited in the old three-masted barque *Winterhude*. He might have been a business man, so trim was his lounge suit, so precise his movements. It was hard to imagine him in that sort of cold ecstasy which a skipper who liked to crack on sail undoubtedly experienced. But he said as we left:

"Ah, Eriksson, you're a lucky man! *Herzogin* is the strongest ship and *Winterhude* the weakest. I too would like to sail, but I dare not press her."

Then he added, with the kindest smile at me, "I too would like my wife to sail with me."

Then there was the mercurial Calle Granith, with his ravaged face and quick, gay mind, a disillusioned idealist who scribbled down his thoughts and fancies but never made them public. They went to the bottom with him when *Olivebank* struck a mine in the first days of the war. The handful of boys who were saved by clinging to the top of the rigging, which remained above water, said they last saw him rushing down to his quarters to get the ship's papers.

I like to think of him, not drowning like a rat, but sitting in the *stuga* at Pellas on the eve of that tragic voyage, recounting the hilarious history of *Ponape's* last days, a leaky old good-for-nothing-but-the-shipbreakers barque, though he managed to keep up her pose as a pretty young seaworthy wench for her new Lithuanian owners.

Some undertone in his voice, some strange intensity in the grip of his hand as he said farewell that night cast a gloom over us after he went.

"You might think he never expected to see us again," we said prophetically.

A sensitive soul, Calle Granith, for all his roistering.

Mikael Sjögren, big and boisterous, with no visible neck to join his huge torso and egg-shaped head came nearer to the popular idea of a "windjammer skipper". His brother Gerhard was quite different, quietly at ease, a man of great skill and judgment in his profession, authoritative and contained.

Linus Lindvall, married to Sven's sister Mery, was quiet too, but a cracking good sailor with a marked roll in his walk and a heart of gold.

The youthful-looking Calle Broman, the two old sea-dogs Artur Söderlund and Ivar Hägerstrand, silent and leonine Mauritz Mattson, nut-faced Björkfeld and the frail mouse-like Gunnar Boman, they were all as different as could be. I searched their faces for that something which linked them, the something which made a reality of that term "*Bästa broder*" which they used to each other in letters—dear brother. It seemed to lie in their eyes and in their mouths. Large or small, inset or protruding, grey, blue or brown, heavily lashed or red-rimmed, their eyes were excessively wary and alert, even when veiled with laughter, booze or fatigue. They were the eyes of men who had to look circumstances in the face, but who had at their command many weapons, which had, however, to be kept sharp and polished. Their mouths reflected the same character; the lips, whatever their shape, precisely closed as they listened, the muscles very firm and mobile at the corners. One looked at these men, and could not imagine any of them ever losing his head.

It was this look which epitomized the good things the sea and sail could do to a man. It was the lure of acquiring this look which drew most of the odd elements among the crews. At that time there were about five hundred men employed in the Erikson deep-water fleet. Finnish nationals, and Ålänings in particular, were taken on first with no thought of apprenticeship fees, because they had to have practice in sail to get their mate's

and master's tickets. The Germans, the Belgians, the British, the Americans, the Dutch and the French found their way into the fo'c'sles because on these world-encircling voyages in sail there was something that modern times lacked. It was not only muscle, quick reactions and the traditional thrills of the sea that most of them were after. They instinctively yearned for that queer discipline of the soul which only deep water in square-rig can give. The canny Gusta reaped quite a little profit from them all.

Fathers and mothers, too, of varying nationalities, but mostly British, brought their sons to the Erikson skippers.

"Make a man of him, Captain," they would plead.

There was one in *Herzogin's* saloon in Copenhagen, a tall old Englishman with memories of clipper days. The smallish, shy, pink-cheeked lad who was his son wore what looked like a cadet's uniform; peaked cap with the suspicion of gold braid. My heart bled for him, and I longed to warn him to stow it well out of sight in his stiff new sea-bag before he encountered his fellows-to-be. The *pojkar* were none too fond of green young Britishers especially if they were grandly dressed. But there might be hope for him. After all that Australian, young Norman Hanlin, had managed to hold his own in the end by nearly biting off his tormentor's finger, and from a woebegone seasick lamp-post had gone through the whole gamut of initiation round the Horn and up the Atlantics till in Falmouth he was sliding down the back-stays with the best of them.

Three Danes also presented themselves at Schierbeck's office. *Herzogin* and *Olivebank* both needed more Scandinavian stiffening in their crews, and the two skippers, Sven and Linus, gruffly appraised this offering.

The three boys stood fumbling their caps in nervous fingers, looking as polite and humble and seaworthy as they knew how. They were smart with their answers about previous experience, but were very reserved about their lack of it. In a moment of altruism Sven chose the two worst looking, and let his brother-in-law have the big chap. Then he was seized with doubts.

"I would only have to see them working for five minutes to know if they were good or bad," he murmured, "but don't be sure you've got the best, Linus, it's not always the biggest that are the smartest."

Linus shrugged and looked well pleased with his 200-lb. Dane. Having been mate in *Herzogin*, he knew that she could well have done with half a dozen more of such, for without brace winches and being heavily rigged with a huge spread of canvas, she needed muscle backed by weight. He was glad to be master of *Olivebank*, a lighter, easier ship.

Crews, passengers and provisions were now complete and stowed on board. There had been little time for enjoying the sights of Copenhagen, apart from an excursion to Tivoli, a gobble of *rödspotta* at a famous fish restaurant (where the fish was fresh enough for they swam in a tank till each menu was decided on), and lunch at Wivex, where the appetite quailed before a *smörgåsbord* of two hundred dishes, each a work of art appealing to the eye as well as the palate.

"It's a good thing," said Linus, who shared our lunch, "that Mery doesn't know how much I am spending here!" and he hastened to wash the smoked reindeer's tongue down with a swill of burgundy.

I toyed with the prune I had found inside the pike's belly and wondered a little whether I should ever change my character to fit the role of that gorgon, a skipper's wife.

But when the presiding Schierbeck asked us "to eat a little something and drink a little something" at a farewell party for his favourite Erikson skippers, I was glad Sven wasn't paying for it, because Danish standards of what constituted a good party were very high. The most exotic delicacies, the most sparkling of wines circulated round the central decoration, which was a swan made of crisp lettuce leaves, celery and radishes, the prettiest thing that ever slipped out of a chef's fantasy.

We ate, we drank, we skåled, we talked, we danced, Towards morning through the swan's lettuce-leaf wings I caught a glimpse

of Sven, poker-faced above his dinner jacket. He gave me a weary little smile, a surreptitious wave of the fingers and would have instantly dropped off to sleep if I had not kicked him on the shin.

Schierbeck's party was already the glittering memory it is still today by the time we were in the motor-boat and nosing through the rain to the ship.

VI

Ballast

RELINQUISHED by a tug, a steamer thrusts her way brutally through the water, shoving it aside until she has reached her standard speed, at which she settles down to eat up the offending miles with a fine disregard for the whims of Nature. No delight is hers to woo the wind, no song of content hums in her rigging. Yet the moment of departure for even such as she is still a moment of drama, the leap of a captive into freedom.

A clumsy one, however, beside the poignant spectacle of a sailing ship released like a wild dove from its cage, pinioning its way in an ecstasy of freedom over the wide water.

That October day, lying at anchor in Copenhagen roads together with *Winterhude* and *Olivebank*, we watched the three-masted barque *Penang* take wing as the tug released her. The sails blossomed on her yards and she leaned over in her eagerness. Then away she fled down the Danish Sound for freedom and Australia. . . .

Her departure was chorused by the disapproving grunts of the masters and mates in the three anchored ships:

"Down Öresund and Kattegat maybe, but never a good slant out of Skagerrak. Beat about on a lee shore in the dark and lucky if it wasn't storm."

Back the three masters went to playing patience and reading the day before yesterday's papers, suppressing a fever of impatience.

The mates of each ship kept on deck eyeing the weather, and as towards evening the wind slid round to a more favourable quarter their knuckles rattled on their skippers' doors and announced the news. Cards and papers fluttered to the deck, and the blowing of whistles set off a ruffle of activity in each ship. The clonk and rattle of anchor chains coming in started the gulls mewing in alarm, and their clamour mingled with the shouts of mates and crews. Figures scuttered along yards, frantically loosing gaskets, and the wings of the big square-sails unfolded in drooping points as the clews came out. The jibs fluttered a moment, the helmsman brought the wheel over, the tops'ls filled their bellies with a sigh, trembling as they tautened, and the ships' long lean bodies began to slide through the water, gathering speed swiftly as sail after sail flowered aloft.

Winterhude got away first, showing us a clean and insolent stern, the gallant old rattletrap! But *Herzogin* was swiftly on her tracks, a foaming bone in her teeth, eager, leaning, humming, her blocks beating a tattoo. Astern came *Olivebank*, a tall vision in our wake. The three ships chased each other up the narrow Öresund, three wild marcs with streaming tails.

Herzogin began to work the bit in her teeth, as foam fled along her sides. Her croon deepened as each fresh sail boomed into action on her yards. In a few minutes she had overhauled the little ship and was spanking past her. As the setting sun broke through cloud the two ships were caught in a pool of molten gold. To us *Winterhude* was a sepia silhouette on a sequin back drop, unreal as a fairy tale. To them *Herzogin* was a towering golden glory of rushing speed and power, a sight, some said, that would live with them till they died.

On and on, meeting steamers that hastily veered from her path, dipping a flag if they had time; on and on, rushing through the dusk until she was enveloped in the intermittent light and darkness of a cloudy moonlit night; speeding towards the cluster of lights at Helsingör, ranting and roaring through the night, burning blue flares to warn of her coming, and at last striding over the

threshold of the Baltic where Hamlet's castle frowns towards the Swedish shore; on and on and finally into full storm in Skagerak, beating up and down among shoals and steamers for days, catching glimpses of her rivals likewise entrapped, and at last creeping past the black teeth of Norway into the open North Sea. Free of the land, three oceans before her, *Herzogin* gathered her strength like a thoroughbred who must go fast and far.

By that time she had ground down the vital forces of her master, mates and crew to a blunt edge. In all the world voyage nothing could be more perilous than this getting in or out of the Baltic. Steamer captains, though aware of the etiquette involved on meeting sail, seldom seemed to expect to meet it. Though I am sure that there was not one man afloat who would have intentionally harmed these gallant relics, there were many who were slack and ignorant and flustered.

The furrows lay deep on Sven's face before we cleared the Norwegian coast, and well they might, for *Herzogin* had had more than her share of narrow shaves. In the tightest squeeze of Öresund, approaching Hamlet's castle, one of the arrogant, helter-skelter ferry boats between Sweden and Denmark had nearly caused disaster, both to herself and us. She was in full career, blinded by the glare of her own lights, band playing merrily and her after-deck crowded with dancers. No blue flares, bells clanging, shouts or frantic whistling caught her notice. She slipped under our bows unaware of what she was doing until our stem splintered her stern flagpole and the dancers set up a screech of terror as they saw the fierce beak of the jib-boom thrusting low over them and the great tower of canvas which was the fore-rigging. To them we were as direful as some prehistoric monster suddenly swooping on them out of the dark.

Worse was to come. Later on, beating about on a short tack in black night, awkwardly near to Laesö Trindel shoal, close-hauled in a squally gale, in a bucking and confused sea that shot in sprays over the weather bow, nightmares became realities.

The one we hit was a trawler, snugly asleep with no look-out

and lights displayed, which, though very convenient for her own comfort, gave the opposite indication of what she was actually doing. In the tumult of the night the bump seemed slight. No shouts elicited a reply from the low dim shape receding behind a veil of spray into the murk.

"Are you all right? Are you all right?"

We hoped they were because we ourselves were too perilously near a lee shore to try to help them.

"The devilish trawlers——! the *satanas fan—perrrrrikle—perrrikile——!*" swore the mate, shaking his fist into the darkness. "Not even a look-out on deck! A bloody little cow-lantern stuck on their stern!—And lie themselves hoarse when they come into court!"

Having ascertained that we had a leak, but only a slight one and easily plugged with a cement box, he hastened to write up the log with extreme precision. It was as well. The court case lasted for a number of years, and finally came to a conclusion when *Herzogin* herself had passed into history.

Herzogin close-hauled in a choppy sea gave everyone a lively time. Though every bone in my body ached I could have stayed on deck till I dropped, so fascinating it was and so starved was I of the sight and the sound of her in heavy weather after my year-long sojourn ashore.

"Don't be silly. Go to bed," said Sven, "there'll be plenty of bad weather before we get to the Line."

To my chagrin sleep was not my reward for obedience, but the ignominy of seasickness. I lay helpless in the dizzily waltzing state of the marital bunk. *Herzogin* was always a demon for thrashing her tail. Now she shuddered as she jammed the wind, her rudder thumping and creaking almost in my ear. Hour upon hour I lay, longing for Sven to come and boot me out and up on deck, where a little honest work would surely have cured the pangs; but he had no time, even for that. I was only aware of the squeak of his *pjåxors* and a kind hand patting me for a brief moment, as he looked in to see if I was yet alive.

"I'll give you a hot bath," he promised, "when we get out of this. It's all that rich Danish food that has upset you."

What a sop to my perished pride that suggestion was—not sea-sickness, but a bilious attack!

It was a bath I shall never forget. It was a long time coming, but it was hot and deep and it slopped and surged in the enormous enamel bath tub with which Rickmers the builders had seen fit to equip the master's bathroom. I was flaccidly afloat but held by the scruff of the neck while Sven scrubbed me systematically with a scrubbing brush, putting a glow into my limp body. Impersonal and efficient, I had often seen him give Paik a similar scrub. That gentleman now thrust his inquiring nose through the bathroom door, and eyed me over the rim of the bath tub.

"Rather you than me!" he seemed to say.

"And now," said Sven, "quickly dry yourself. Rub hard. Into warm clothes and up on deck. *Pjäxors* too."

Jerking out the plug, he was gone, certain of being obeyed.

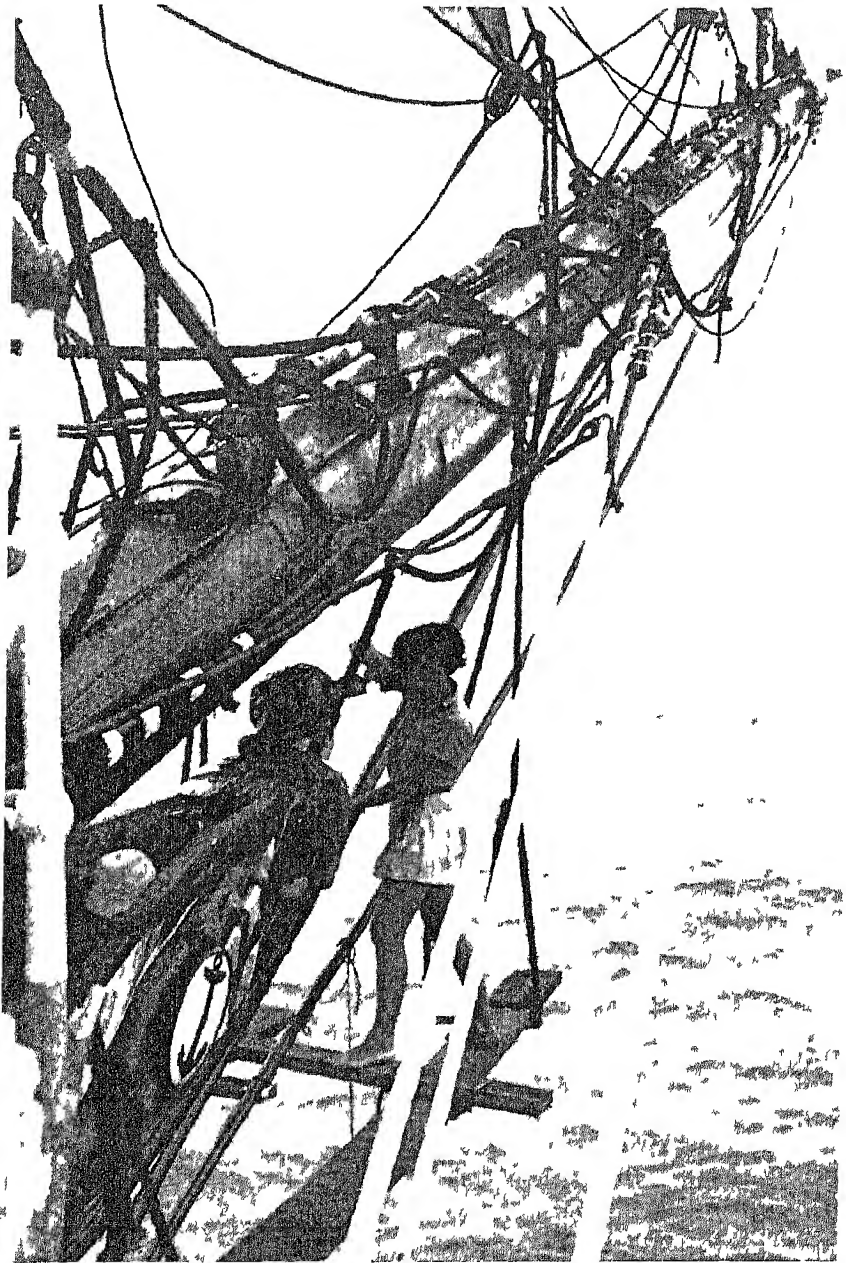
"Well," I thought, hastening to carry out the orders, "this is the time when an ordinary sort of wife would begin thinking about divorce. To be scrubbed down like that!—with a scrubbing brush!—and then left to dry oneself! And ten minutes ago I couldn't stand! But I'm feeling fine, and blessings on a husband who knows what to do when, and gives one the right sort of help when one needs it, and leaves one to fend for oneself when fending for oneself is good for the soul!"

It was not long before Sven had plenty of time for me. The North Sea lay, docile and glittering in the autumn sunlight, as tidy as a park through which *Herzogin* ambled on an easy rein.

Letters and parcels which had arrived in Copenhagen still lay unopened, and we whiled away a pleasant morning discovering what was inside them. One particular parcel, very neatly done up by the Army and Navy Stores chemist's department, I left to the last, knowing what it contained.

Sven eyed it with interest and at last asked what was in it.

"Oh," I said, "it's just a good stock of those herbs I have to take



11 "She was my girl and I was proud of her "



12 "At last she was finished".



13. "She had small, shell-like ears with which she listened to the humming in the rigging."

every day to make my tummy work. They ought to last me up to Falmouth."

"Every day?" he exclaimed. "Every day?"

"Yes, every day," I said. "I've always had to since I was a child, mummy says."

"Yestus!" he mocked, taking the parcel up to look at it. Before I knew what he was doing he had popped it through the porthole.

I stood aghast, and then fury slowly rose in me.

"Sven!" I shrieked. "You perfect devil! Castor oil doesn't agree with me and that's all you've got in the medicine chest!"

"Don't worry," he said, "you certainly won't get any while I have the key. If your tummy won't work you climb up to the royals every morning."

This proved a far surer remedy than any pernicious herb or pill, of which none have passed my lips since that enlightening morning.

North of Scotland it fell dead calm. We lilted and rocked on the oily undulations. Very beautiful they were, these high latitudes in this autumnal trance; the eerie colours, maroon and *eau-de-nil*, flushing the stratus clouds and dripping their riches into the pewter waters. Some witch had dyed them and the dye had run. Columns of tyrrhean purple trembled down to the very hull of the ship, where she lay like an old grey wether on a heather upland.

Back and forth between capstan and capstan we paced, chipping each other a bit over the sparks that flew now that our hitherto rigorously bachelor habits were up for inspection at close quarters: but all the perils of marriage seemed worth the risk if we could keep the glow of trust warm and fed between us. I had a lot to learn. Human relationships were not the gay transient things I had supposed. In some curious way, quite divorced from the burgomaster and his *äktenskap*, we had become responsible for each other's happiness, for each other's needs, for each other's development. A frail new moon hung in the western sky, and Sven and I only half mockingly bowed to her and wished

each his silent wish. There were few young moons in the next twenty years that did not receive this homage. The wish was always the same—and was always granted. . . .

"No wild horses last night," said Sven. "We're in for a long calm."

His wild horses were one of the things the mate and I had learnt to accept just as in Åland one accepts the rain-boding *spilkråka*, that prophetic bird. They careered through the skipper's dreams well ahead of the barometer. If he found himself hardly able to control them he made his plans accordingly, prepared to take in sail and rig lifelines. As Nils I had not found it an easy fact to swallow. Now that I was able to confirm it by being told of them immediately he woke it was no surprise either to learn that his father had the same faculty.

An extreme sensitivity to habitual environment evolved by succeeding generations may be the root of instinct—the cold scientific phrase gave me no satisfaction. The future taught me that the shutter of Time, which is the severest limit to human perception, did not always close instantly over the lens which was Sven's old, wise and mature spirit.

In the leisured days of calm Gunnar seized the opportunity to coddle us. His pale gold quiff nodded over the burnished copper of the coffee kettle nestling on the neatly set tray which he would bring unbidden to the saloon where we could drink in privacy apart from the passengers and mates. It was my first insight into how cosy a home could be.

Gunnar's was a benign and gentle personality, radiating from him as he stood at the door chatting in his soft respectful drawl. He was married to Sven's cousin and had one child. Once or twice he dropped the role of steward, and addressed Sven by his Christian name, giving us good advice.

"Jo, jo, Sven, it's all very well for now, but what about having a proper home, somewhere where your children can grow up, somewhere to come back to. I would never have left mine if it hadn't been you who asked me."

I contrasted this gentle, wise and perfect steward with the *förbannad* Felix, marvelling at the difference. One could not imagine Gunnar being ladled into a boat from a docker's barrow, crowning a boozy heap of humanity which the apprentices had gathered up from the Belfast pubs and piled in the boat, shored up by their luggage rather as one shores ballast. But home was an Åland ideal that Felix, too, must have cherished in his rough heart, for soon he was to build in Lemland a trim little doll's house for himself and his childless wife, choosing a spot where a weeping birch already made a pretty picture.

Here, sipping coffee served from a tray spread with a starched lace-edged cloth, it was hard to picture *Herzogin* as she had once been in these very tracts of ocean, awash, on her beam ends, her entire suit of sails an aspen tatter of rags, and every man aboard her cracking nerve and muscle to right the shifted ballast. Foodless and sleepless, they had struggled on for days, aware that nothing but their own endurance could help them.

Ruben de Cloux was her master then, no longer young, but he had worked in the holds as long and as hard as any, and gradually, as the luck of the quiet weather held, her main yard-arm had risen out of the water, inch by laborious inch, and she was finally righted, her rigging picked clean of rags, new sail bent and set, food cooked, and on her course again for Australia.

Sven, who had newly come to her as chief mate, spoke of this time with an overtone of awe, not for what they had accomplished but for the strength and endurance of the ship herself. From that time he began to love her. The brisk young mate, with his poker face, tearing energy and cold furies when the pace of work slackened, had a capacity for love which perhaps only a ship could have absorbed.

I loomed at the faded photographs. A desolate sight she had indeed been, but how little they told of the web of human tensions and passions that had been spun of that event.

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The calm broke with a sigh that came visibly groping towards the ship like a stealthy paw. Nine days of frustration followed, beating between Rockall and St. Kilda.

The bird-capped lump of rock and the bleak scraggy island lay like two sullen watchdogs in our path. A dreary impatience enveloped us. Here she was with her bottom clean as a whistle, her ballast trimmed to a nicety, with a crew already shaping well, a mate who liked to see the trucks quiver and a master who longed to give her her head, and all she could do was to tramp back and forth like a sentry. By the evening of the ninth day it was hard to answer the passengers' comments politely.

Something almost legendary in the seafaring world now happened. Though not quite as rare and curious as a sea serpent, it has always had much the same fascination for the yarner and teller of tall tales. Indeed, it had something of the nature of a ravening monster, bearing down upon its prey with gaping sucking mouth; a legend in a pub, but no less a real terror to a sailing ship at sea. So vivid it still is in my mind that I have only to shut my eyes to see those dwarf moons hanging in the gaseous air.

Sven's wild horses had given him a wrestle during the night, so that there were lifelines rigged long before it had really begun to blow in the evening. The wind did not come in a pounce but intensified minute by minute as dusk fell. It screeched, yelled, and bayed in the rigging, and boom-boom-boom went the great drums of the lower tops'ls. Deeper went the drum, and shrilling ever higher the fifes in the stays, and louder and louder thrummed the shrouds. A strange, harsh noise like the grinding of giant teeth joined the din, until the whole ship was quivering in a cacophony of shrieking hysteria, ear-splitting, dazing and annihilating the senses.

I was hooked on to the mizzen shrouds, aware of the fell spirit abroad. In the chartroom Sven had been wrapped in some incantation, wedged where he could manipulate rulers and callipers on a chart. His lips were pursed when he left the aura of the lamp, and now I could see one eye and his great jetty of a nose faintly

illuminated by the binnacle lights. He was gazing into the compass as if he would pluck from it the secret of all wisdom.

Both watches had been battling in the darkness above, taking in more sail. Faintly their cries could be heard and presently they were all on deck again, huddled in clinging groups about the poop. We all noticed that the sea had flattened, because the tops of the combers were being blown into spume before ever they raised a shoulder.

I leant away from the mizzen shrouds and scrambled over to the mate, who had emerged out of the blackness and was now braced against a fife rail. He was all of a fidget, but talkative.

"Something funny up!" he bawled in my ear. "Just trust the skipper!"

He gripped my shoulder and shook it reassuringly.

"Don't get seasick now," he bayed on, "you might miss something worth while!"

But it was no use trying to mock the moment. It was already upon us in all its awesomeness. The din aloft suddenly stopped as if it had been chopped off with a knife, and the air grew stagnant in a matter of seconds. Above us a black pall opened to a coronet of swirling vapour, and through the brownish airless void an array of dwarf moons, the stars bereft of all cheer and twinkle, shed their hellish light on us. Everything turned a filthy brown; the air, the ship, the sea from which came a sucking animal noise as it pulsatud up and down in doughy pyramids. Though we lay in a pool of quiet, distant from all sides came the snarling of the encircling gale. All on deck knew instinctively what it was—the centre of a cyclone.

We lay there, five minutes perhaps, entranced, powerless, gazing at those unfamiliar moons. If we should capsize now, at the end of that ominous pause, if the whole mighty forest of rigging should come crashing down on us, if the sea should quietly suck us under to integration with the elements, it would be quite a way to die, I thought, together with the Duchess!

But "Trust the skipper" the mate had said. He had now gone

to stand beside him amidships. The little moons threw confused shadows on the decks.

We all knew the gale would soon burst upon us again, but from which quarter? Moment dragged on moment, heavy with the acuteness of senses stretched to their keenest to catch a hint of what was to come.

When the skipper's order came it was quiet and incisive; but it bounced in a crescendo from mate to mate, and the whole crew sang out and rushed to the braces. By the time the gale banged into her the yards were round and she surged from inert coma to quivering speed.

Such joy—such relief—the night was black again and normal, the loathsome brownness gone. A gale? Why, it was a fine, fair fresh breeze, north-east-by-north, which sent us coursing down the backbone of the world, leaping to the Line, where it handed us over to a steady south-westerly, which passed us on to the south-east trade and without a pause we were in the westerlies, devouring great mouthfuls of the chart, past Tristan da Cunha and south, far south of the Cape of Good Hope.

There was no time to get on with a bit of painting even, grumbled the second, whose heart was still in pots of paint, though he had now acquired the correct quality and degree of swagger which denoted the second mate's berth in *Herzogin Cecilie*.

Tagging now in Sven's wake as he made his daily rounds I began to realize how little time was devoted to navigation and how much to sheer housekeeping. Not only must a master in sail be able to calculate the course of a cyclone, set broken limbs, maintain strict discipline, and gauge the nutritional needs of a ravenous set of youngsters for an indefinite period; he must also be a tailor, a brewer and an architect, not to speak of having a working knowledge of plumbing, fitting, turning and carpentry, and being a blacksmith as well.

In *Herzogin*, with her tens of thousands of square feet of canvas, Sailmaker was always busy, and never satisfied with the size of his

team. Most of the time he laboured in the gloom under the poop deck, his long upper lip curved and drooping to match his long narrow curved back. His curves partook of something of the curves of his sails, for his thin and under-developed legs were curved too, and so were his arms, lean and powerful, and his fingers curved like steel springs. At sea he lived for his sails.

In port he lived for his bottle; but he never mixed the one with the other. He had neither home nor family. He seldom talked, except with the skipper, and that was in a husky chortling whisper, and always of sails and the art of making them. At sea he took little heed of official working times, but would sit and sew by lantern light long after the daymen were in bed. Not a stitch could be got out of him, however, as long as his money lasted in port. He went ashore in a threadbare dun-coloured suit with very capacious pockets, and in these he would hopefully try to smuggle a load of bottles on board again. He was often caught, for he was always so be-boozed by the time he was staggering up the gangway that he would never notice the skipper till that exasperated man had snatched the bottles from those pockets of his, and crashed them to smithereens against the outside of the bulwarks. Sailmaker's whimper was pathetic if this was the last load he had cash for, and next day he would lapse into a mournful sulk, looking like a half-crushed spider as he sat surrounded by all the paraphernalia of his trade—but accomplishing nothing at all.

"You might," I pleaded, "just as well have let him have his bottles."

The highlight of Sailmaker's existence was when a new square-sail was to be cut. A bright fair day was always chosen, and with an air of ritual the sail plan book was brought on deck, opened on the after hatch, and there pored over by Sven and the sailmaker. For years the skipper had been perfecting these patterns until each sail could be nicely tailored to suit *Herzogin's* particular needs. Blue pencils and rulers were fetched from the chart room and then a couple of apprentices would toil up with the bolts of

new canvas. Presently the deck would be littered with the stiff, uncompromising stuff, oatmeal-coloured, the toughest fabric ever woven by man. Double Nought it was, from Arbroath. Lying in crisp chaotic bands all about the deck, it was hard to imagine how it could be snugged into the bolt ropes to flatter the figure of the wind. For that is what a sail must do, cling to the swelling bosoms and wrap the sleek thighs of those invisible valkyries of breeze and storm.

An enormous pair of scissors lay at hand, and each at his belt carried a newly sharpened *puoko*.¹ The skipper measured, and Sailmaker and the two boys cut and sliced. The skipper wrote a blue-pencilled number here and there, and Sailmaker and his minions bore it all off with an air of confidence and triumph. A couturier who sees the master design of his collection on its way to the workroom could look no more pleased than Sven.

There was considerable art in creating a sail, but I knew also of the drudgery of palm and needle, joining those endless selvages in a double seam. How glad I had always been when one belonged to the watch and could rush on deck when "two whistles" blew and haul at ropes instead of sitting cross-legged, struggling with this epitome of all toughness. I shuddered at the thought of all the millions of painful stitches which had gone into the making of that huge cloud of sail above us.

Herzogin had three suits of sail. Her newest was kept for the high southern latitudes, where no land impeded the accumulating force of the westerlies as they whirled round the world. Practically her whole dress was changed as we approached the verge of the trades, where even courses heavily patched could be used. In the doldrums the skipper begrudged her every yard of new canvas, for in the long calms the sails chafed and flapped and rotted in the equatorial sun.

Patching was ever in progress. Sailmaker liked to patch old sails with new canvas. He made a wry face when he was forbidden to do this and had to set a boy to ripping old torn sail for the

¹ A Finnish knife.

purpose. I used to think of him with sympathy when I was patching our clothes in the long hard war years in Finland. How glorious it would have been to use material that was crisp and new instead of the less threadbare portions of some impossibly ragged garment.

One of the most important aspects of sailmaking was the preparation of the twine, on which depended the strength of the sail. This involved the mixing of a pungent brew. Sailmaker never trusted himself with this but made certain that the skipper should preside. Wax, tar and God-knows-what seethed in the cauldron a-top the central heating stove. All that was visible in that dark corner were the skipper's large, white, beautifully manicured hands gripping the great ladle, and his pale intense face peering into the broth. Sailmaker's breathy chortles as he mopped and mowed round the stove, adding a little wax, a little tar, stoking the fire, lent black magic to the scene. The excellence even of the very best twine depended on its skilful impregnation with the equally skilfully concocted brew in the cauldron.

Hubble-bubble, toil and trouble! For me the smell that rose from it still remains the heartiest, most delicious, most intriguing scent on earth. To hell with Chanel No. 5!

Sailmaker was an accomplice, too, in the saga of the sofa. The idea was born one rainy afternoon in the westerlies. Too long, too many visitors had sat uncomfortably in the stiff swivel chairs of German days. Too long had one run to fetch others from cabins when even these were too few.

First came a descent into the after-hold, where spare planks were stacked. Then a skirmish into the after-peak where two dilapidated sets of bedsprings reposed. Sailmaker was now consulted. A true artist, he conceived the idea of a magnificent sofa in a flash.

Upholstering, he swore, had been his hobby since childhood. While Sven set to and made the wooden frame, Sailmaker sewed the canvas bands to hold the springs, while I disentangled them

from their rusty cage. Slowly it took form. It became a frame, then a frame with springs, then a frame with springs covered with canvas, then a frame with springs covered with canvas covered with horschair, and so by house-that-jack-built methods to the moment when it was to be covered with some old plush tablecloths, a makeshift until we could reach port.

In the fever of creation I had been somewhat forgotten by this enthusiastic couple, a mere pair of hands at either's beck and call. I waited for the moment when they would surely need a woman's help. My trump card was the sewing machine, mine alone, that they would have to ask for. The moment came, the machine was demanded, and I happily fetched it, placing it on the table and sitting before it with a proprietary air. But though I fiddled with the handle and suggested that this really was my speciality, I knew it was hopeless. I was ousted and had to watch Sailmaker ensconced before it, anxiously guiding the ex-tablecloths while Sven solemnly turned the handle.

My delight was perforce reserved for the moment when we both sat proudly on the sofa and tried to disguise from each other that, magnificent though it looked, it *was* a little hard.

Anyone who has a dearly loved house must know the fun of improving it. Besides all the other things she was to him, *Herzogin* was also Sven's house. Everything he did for her was a labour of love. He cleared away a dreary jumble of cupboards round the jigger mast, and he and the mate sweated through trade winds and tropic calms to fashion a circular sofa, which, lighted by the newly inserted skylight retrieved from the dismayed barque *Hougomont*, made the nucleus of a lounge for passengers and mates.

When the two old brass lanterns discovered in the afterpeak were hung on each side of the large mirror, and some grand looking magazines a year old strewn on the table, we all put on our best clothes and sat there with pleasant expressions fixed on our faces, waiting for my automatic gadget to click the camera. The result was a picture of tense dignity which we intended to

send to the owner as visible proof of this new splendour. After all, it was *his* ship.

The small messroom of my 1934 trip was now two passenger cabins and the old pantry another. Innumerable arguments had occupied innumerable hours about the right colours for No. 1, and the shade of carpet for No. 2. The new mess was palatial, and the steward's pantry compact, convenient and capacious. All the spices had their separate drawers. Who could foresee the day when we would empty a whole drawerful of cardamom seed into the sea, and chuck the beautifully fitting drawer after it, so sodden would we be with the loss of hope and the spiritual fatigue that comes from too long a struggle against too heavy odds.

But on New Year's Eve 1935 the pantry was the scene of enthusiastic bustle. Gunnar and I were preparing the midnight festivities. After the mate coming off watch had had his supper, we set the long table with all the delicacies we had mustered. The *pièce de résistance* was, of course, tinned crab, but smothered with mayonnaise. I had set about making this early in the morning, and what with adding egg yolk to uncurdle it and then more oil to thicken it and then some vinegar to thin it, I ended up at 11 a.m. with a wash-basin full of the stuff. There was not so much crab but there was plenty of mayonnaise.

"Use it up as a sauce for salt pork," suggested Gunnar.

I had also made a chocolate pudding, and Gunnar had devised some delicious savoury hot stuff which he planned to serve after the *smörgåsbord*. We were both engrossed in domestic details, and I for one was spoiling for the moment when Sven, the mates and passengers could be bidden down and all this lusciousness disclosed to them.

On deck all was warmth, peace and beauty. We were somewhere south of the Australian Bight. The moon flooded tranquil waters, rippling under a midsummer westerly. Sven and I had been strolling up and down gossiping, until suddenly it grew chilly. I went below to fetch a coat and when I returned he was

leaning over the rail, in no mood for further chatter, for he neither replied nor appeared to listen to me.

He gazed out into the mist which had begun to gather round us. In spite of the coat I shivered. When the hand-turned fog-horn bleated from the fo'c'sle head I peered inquiringly into the gloom and saw the Sven was listening intently. When the lookout man forrard broke into a lusty New Year chant, he shouted angrily to the mate to shut him up. But when both bells were jangled noisily to welcome in the New Year he listened again intently.

"No echo, *Kapten*," said the mate, "but it's ice all right."

"You go below and make it cheerful for the passengers," said Sven to me, and to the mate, "take the temperature of the water every five minutes."

While dealing out crab, mayonnaise and cheerfulness, I hid some dismal thoughts. A summer berg had been the doom of the five-masted barque *Köbenhavn*, Sven was convinced. *Herzogin* had sighted her near Tristan, a glorious picture, this magnificent Danish training-ship on her maiden voyage, brimful with cadets. They were both running the easting down, bound for Australia. This was the last that was ever seen of her or her crew. *Herzogin* herself met ice far north that year.

The mist had become a fog, but when Sven appeared at the feast I knew the danger was over. By the time the last *skål* had chased the last morsel of crab down the last gullet, the moonlight was flooding down again, and the fog patch an innocent-looking blur astern. We all sauntered about the decks, digesting crab.

"Beautiful night," exclaimed the passengers. "Funny thing, that mist, though!"

Before the end of the decade another barque was to vanish in the westerlies, *L'Avenir*, her fate as mysterious as *Köbenhavn's*. That the Danish ship had at least had time to launch a boat was revealed by a paragraph which appeared in the late forties in a South African paper. Half-buried in the sand, on one of the most desolate stretches of the Natal coast, the rotted remains of a

lifeboat were discovered in which were a few jumbled bones and rags of uniform. A broken plank bore the tell-tale letters ". . havn".

Herzogin had had plenty of opportunity to crash into icebergs. In 1932 on the run to the Horn, she had had to sail for two days at right angles to her course, skirting an archipelago of ice. Now in 1935 she encountered bergs under the most dangerous conditions.

Polar voyagers talk glibly of icebergs and well they may. Specially constructed ships, radio in case of disaster, even the knowledge that they are sure to encounter them lessens the peril: but to find oneself among them on a blowing murky night in the fifty-fives, without a radio, with visibility during the frequent snow squalls down to a few tens of yards, with a mountainous sea running, in a ship with bows as sharp as a knife, steel to the very soul of her, and only a hand foghorn to moan its forlornness in the hope of echoes, that is to know icebergs in all their terror; frozen fiends, as malignant as dead things that have stolen the soul of the living.

The breath of an iceberg is peculiarly horrible. Ice may have some faint scent, a high vibration that strikes on the keener nostril, as subtle as the smell of a snake. Big bergs certainly have something of the menace of a cobra, coiled, watchful, malicious if disturbed.

We met them in February in the vastest desert of all oceans, the South Pacific. The days, those delightful brisk days of summer in high latitudes, had passed uneventfully. The sun had been so warm that Sailmaker was busy on deck, where the canvas for a new jib would soften in the sunlight. The kittens frisked about him, and from the galley skylight wafted an occasional whiff of baking bread. It was so like the steady trade wind weather that everyone's attention turned from the ship to domestic tasks.

Then the barometer fell. The breeze freshened hourly. From the south-west an ever-heightening sea rolled up, showing emerald crests against the fitful light of late afternoon. A whistling and a humming grew in the rigging, and the royals bellied perilously,

as the yards came running down. As yet it was not squally, and sail was kept on her so that she was touching thirteen knots.

Dark came and no moon rose to light the chaotic sea. We were in for a blow. The skipper settled down to a night of short snoozes on the chartroom sofa, and the mates added mufflers and mittens to their attire.

I kept my eyes open and my boots on till 1 o'clock, but as everyone was either asleep or on deck (where only duty would keep one at that zero hour) and the gale seemed to be just an ordinary one, I went below and turned in.

The hiss of the Swedish "Ec-ce-es!" in my ear sent me hurtling into boots and jacket and up on deck. Night was past but there was nothing to be seen at that moment for we were in the heart of a young blizzard and the hail was rattling into the sails. There was an immense sea running and wind and hail were whipping it into a spumy fog, a stinging, smoking, driving welter through which we scudded blind.

The skirts of the driving squall began to lift and I sensed the presence of something invisible but full of menace. A gleam lightened the quarter to which the mate pointed. Out in the howling desolation a thin line of something rigid extended in the tumult, became less indistinct, greyer than the surrounding fog, finally whitened and took shape; long, squat and table-topped, glimmering with a ghostly inner light, and indeed as unreal as a ghost for it lacked perspective or the sense of weight or texture.

Did we have to alter course, I asked the mate. He shook his head. I watched the thing as we drew past it. Once again it was obscured in a squall. Then, with dramatic suddenness, the sun sprang out and shone upon a world of water, turning the vapours of the receding squall to curdled milk and the iceberg to a glittering jewel.

It was perfectly steady in that ferocious sea, as steady as land rooted to the bowels of the earth. The huge waves, breaking against its weather side, rose in ceaseless fountains that crashed back into the sea, baffled. A great cave gazed from its face, a blue

cyclop's eye. It was there, glaring at us, every time we rose on the breast of a sea, baleful, beautiful. After the next squall passed we saw it no more.

Every eye was strained ahead. There was an ice look-out in the bows and the mate on watch scarcely left the break of the poop. He craned and peered ceaselessly from port to starboard, and when the bells were struck, impressed upon the look-outs to keep their eyes peeled for "the little bits".

"It's the little bits that are the worst," he kept saying. "In this squally weather perhaps we won't see them till we're on them, and even if they are awash they're big enough to sink us."

The t'gallant halliards smoked as the yards came groaning down. Soon the ship was under lower topsails, with upper topsails on her main and fore, yet she did thirty-nine miles that watch.

More frequent, but not so lengthy, the squalls coursed each other hollering over the ocean, giving us a chance to see a good way ahead between them. Presently, in the same indefinite way that the first berg had made its appearance, something else loomed up on the starboard bow, a huge and towering something, which came and vanished in the drifting fog. Each time the ship rose we rose unconsciously on tiptoe to see it better, and thought for some minutes that fancy had created it; but it soon took monstrous shape, and revealed itself as a pleasure dome such as Kubla Khan decreed—with caves of ice, mountains and pinacles and capes and caves, smooth as glacier or sharp as needles, an immensity that lost nothing of its fearsomeness by being far off.

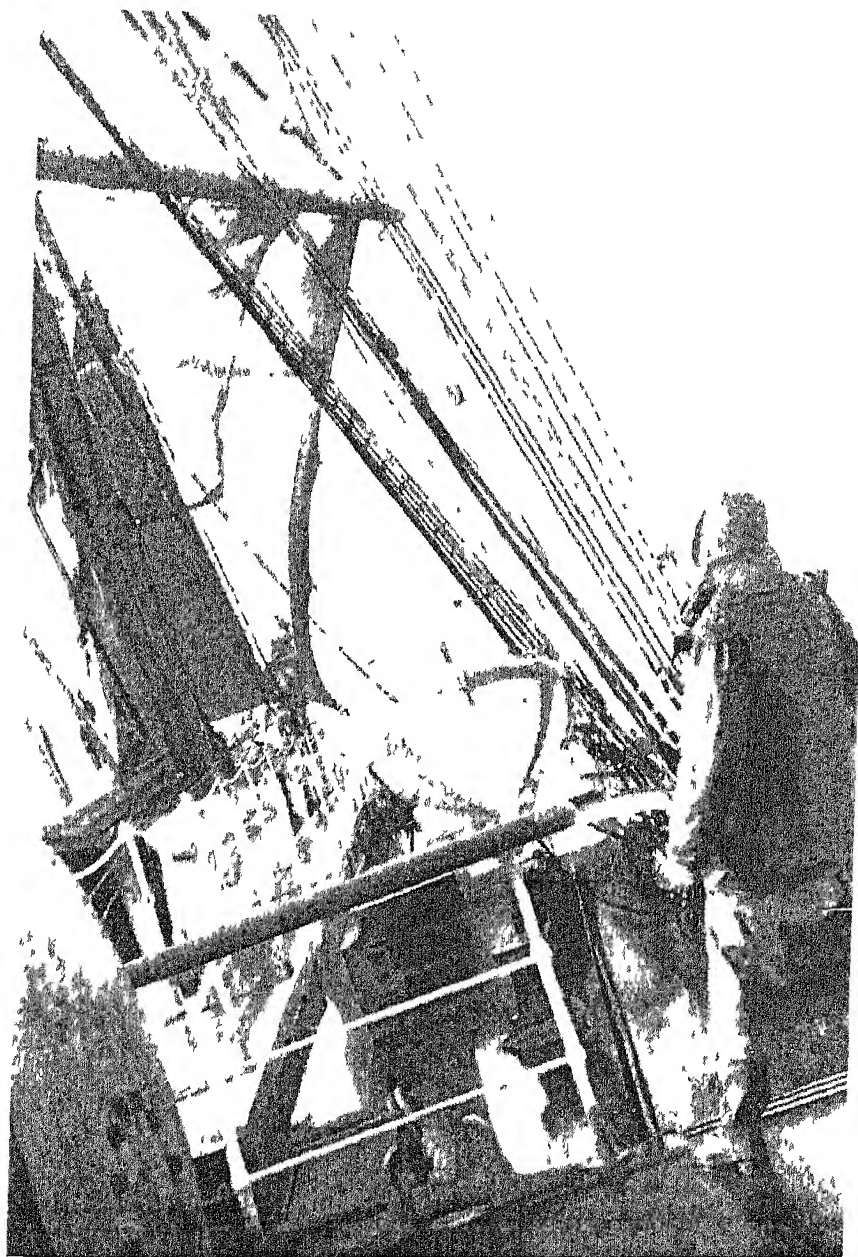
Icebergs were getting on my nerves, so I retired to the galley and made a pudding. The feeling of flour on the fingers and the black warmth of the oven were very comforting. Everyone had been issued with a generous rum ration. I used mine to enrich the pudding. No good being the captain's wife if all one could do was gape at icebergs and feel squeamish about the little bits.

"*Ja, ja*," said Gunnar, his plume of curls nodding, "shall the *kaptenska* make a pudding? Then will I not make such a to-do

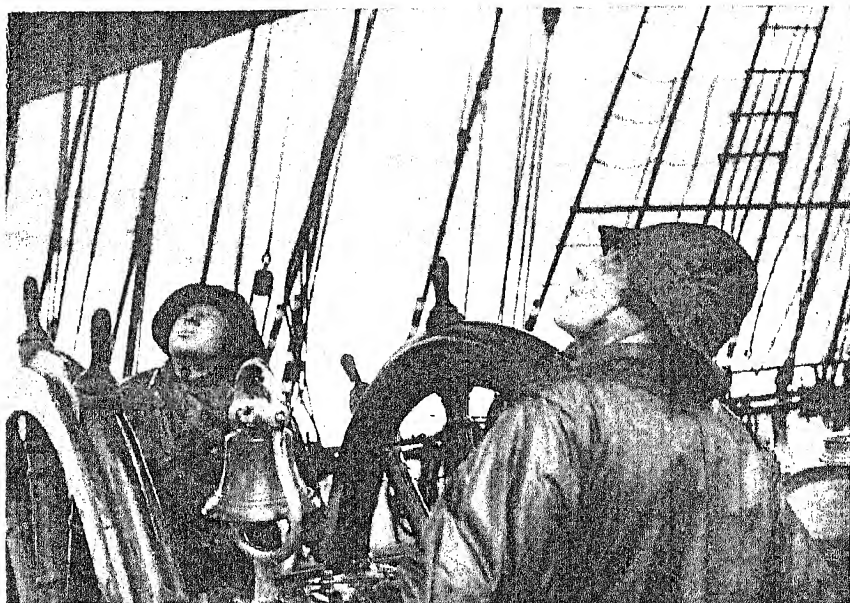
with the meat dish. If *Kapten* would just take off a bit more sail, now, the cooking would go better. Ah, that Pellas Sven!"

Gunnar was scarcely aware of the doings on deck. Quivering royals meant to him oven dishes that had to be levelled up with bricks, pots and pans that skidded, soup that swished and leapt. He clucked and fussed over it while the seventeen-year-old cook, Laine, worked steadily on, so clean, so tidy, so efficient, but sour as rhubarb and sedate as a grandfather. He smiled rarely, and when the smile came it was a bleak crack in his pale, long, lugubrious face.

He had trained in the stewards' and cooks' school in Mariehamn. He always wore a starched chef's cap. After all, he had a high position. He was cook in *Herzogin Cecilie*!

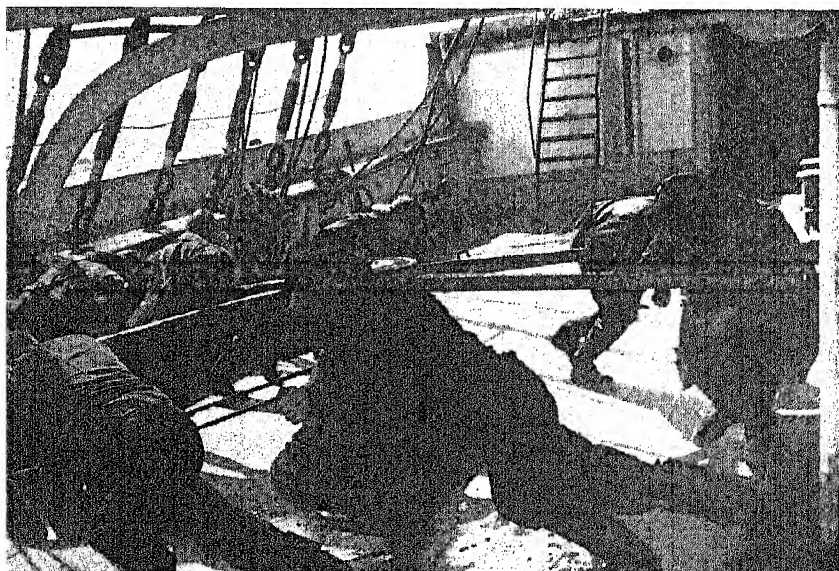


14 Gale in the Southern Ocean New foresail blown out



15. Heavy weather in the Southern Ocean. Two men at the wheel.

16. Capstan work on the fore deck.



VII

Paik

IT WAS very easy to be Sven's second-best wife, because after telling me what they were he forgave me all my mistakes. He made a few himself, too, so I also could distribute largesse in forgiving them.

It was not so easy to be the wife of Paik's master. Paik never forgave mistakes, but he let you know what they were by a look, a growl, and if he thought fit, a nip.

Paik is now a legend—all that remains of him is his collar, hung in an honoured place, still bearing the brass plate with his name, "Paik Eriksson", and his address "*s.v. Herzogin Cecilie*". His bones lie mouldering beneath the turf of a birch glade at Pellas, within sound of the lapping of the tideless sea. A more fitting place would have been with the bones of his old ship, deep in the sands of the English Channel.

He came to her as an outcast, a condemned criminal, too savage to be longer tolerated by the inhabitants of the little Norwegian town of Frederikstad. The big barque, for the first time under Sven's command, lay there loading timber, tied to the quay, the prey of every curious sightseer. Already in the late twenties a big sailing ship was a very rare sight, and short of posting a guard at the gangway, it was impossible to keep intruders off the ship. They would even penetrate to the captain's quarters and take a peep at him as he indulged in an after-dinner snooze.

At twenty-five Sven had such a boyish look that he sometimes

pretended he was a cabin boy, and politely told them that the captain was not on board. He had hoped much of a young Dobermann, but the creature finally ran away after fawning on every undesirable stranger who came on board.

Ferocity and fidelity must be the qualities of the dog that replaced him, said the skipper in a heart-to-heart talk with the police, for it was the same story in every port in which the ship must lie at a quay. The police promised him ferocity; they were doubtful about the fidelity.

A certain woman in Frederikstad owned an Alsatian which had terrorized so many people that it was to be destroyed, since she would not agree to that alternative for canine criminals, the night watch in the timber yards. So it was that Sven met Paik, and a companionship of years was sealed.

It began ominously. Though quite amenable to his mistress, Paik disapproved of the change of ownership. Conducted through the town on a double lead between the policeman and his new master, he broke away and returned home. When he was finally dragged on board he refused to eat, and for the remaining days in port his mistress visited him and fed him herself with all sorts of delicacies.

Once again he broke away. The entire crew were working on the poop deck, but no one dared to stop him as he walked through them and made his way into the town, followed hot foot by his master. A small crowd followed them at a respectful distance, shouting warnings. His reputation was terrible. They all believed he would kill anyone who tried to catch him. Finally, with the help of his old mistress, he was brought on board again.

No amount of kindness seemed to affect him. He bit whom he could, lifted his lip at the slightest attempt at friendliness, and by his behaviour confirmed in every way the reputation he had ashore. His master was not disappointed. This was just what he wanted, and once at sea, on the long voyage to Lourenço Marques, he would have time to show Paik that he had indeed met his master.

The ship sailed, and Paik was allowed to stalk the deck, where all stood respectfully aside for him. He was a magnificent animal, broad in the chest as a bull, his head carried haughtily with pricked ears, his coat thick and shiny, his bushy tail as expressive as his bright eyes; the epitome of fearlessness and strength. He was the only dog I have ever seen who looked you full in the face. He would leap on to the hatch and there he would sit, fair weather or foul, gazing out to sea, a small figure in comparison with the towering clouds of canvas above him, but a personality who dominated the ship.

But in those first few weeks at sea his case seemed pretty hopeless. It was impossible to catch him without using a long hook by which one could both hold him and keep him at arm's length. The steward who had to feed him went in terror about his task, for Paik was not one to be lured into good conduct by food. At last his master realized that kind smiles and soothing words were not the cure for Paik's ways. He determined, at his next misdemeanour, to give him a good hiding.

Sven's first attempt at this was a reversal of the roles of beater and beaten. His second took place in privacy behind the chart house, on the grating where Paik had an uneasy footing. No one knew what happened on that occasion except the participants, but when both emerged from the affair, a new era, and a happier one for both, had begun. Henceforth Paik loved, honoured and obeyed his master, and became, by dint of an extraordinary combination of dignity, fidelity and obedience, famous, and not infamous, in ports in both hemispheres.

He holds, I imagine, the world's record for the only dog who has sailed eight times round the Horn in successive years. In that time he developed a set of habits which all who came in contact with him did well to memorize. Living as he did, without seeing another dog except on his rare visits to Finland, as Sven's constant companion he became humanized to an extraordinary extent. When he finally came ashore he would not for many months take any notice of other dogs, though at last, in a shamefaced way, he

took up with a pointer-lurcher-setter bitch and remained faithful to her till the end of his days.

Womenfolk he could not abide. His loathing for them deepened the shriller, frillier and gigglier they were. Paik's disdainful stare caused me to keep my voice in low pitch and my laugh loud and boisterous, soon after I met him. Frills I had none. As long as I knew my place there were no ructions with Paik.

When his allegiance was still new he would allow no one to touch his master and could not even be trusted to remain quiet if Sven shook hands with either man or woman. When a dance was given on board he had always to be shut up, because he was quick to leap at any woman his master asked to dance.

It was not a happy time for him when I, a mere wife, hove in sight, and he had to tolerate a woman day and night in his master's quarters. He knew, however, that Sven approved of me, and so I was allowed certain privileges, though I paid dearly if I overstepped them. Many a time I had to leap into the shrouds with Paik at my heels—but it was always my fault. I had not kept to his rules. He looked at me sometimes with such a tawny stare that I felt guilty at stealing Sven from him, or rather at intruding with my little offering of love on this duet of devotion.

Sven loved Paik as much as Paik loved him. They had come to trust each other implicitly. This trust, I think, must be the basis of all enduring love, whether between man and dog, or man and woman. When a man says to a woman, "I love you" it can mean so many things, but when he says to her "You are the being I really trust in all the world", it means only one thing, which, unfortunately, English has no separate word for, having used the beautiful sounding "love" for half a dozen tawdry emotions.

Paik, like the English, had no word for what he would express. Sometimes it welled up in him so that looks were not enough and he must lick his master's hand. Sven would stroke his head and shake his own at him.

"Fina hund inte slicka!" he would say—noble dogs don't lick!

The suspicion of a tear would glint in Paik's eye, and he would

crouch down at Sven's feet with a sigh. One of my prayers is that Paik's soul may meet his master's wherever they may be wandering, untrammelled by the limitations of canine and human bodies.

One of Paik's rules was that he must be the first to greet Sven when he came aboard. This, when we anchored in the ballast ground off Boston Island, I did not know. Sven went ashore in the motor-boat to collect mail and possibly his orders. I stayed on board for the mere pleasure of watching *Pommern* and *Ponape* swinging at anchor in company with us. Sven was gone several hours, and Paik and I, though not in company, paced the deck impatiently. At last a speck appeared on the water at the far end of Boston Island. We both hugged the railings as we watched it approach. Impatience mounted and the time seemed long before the boat reached the gangway and Sven came up the steps. I stepped forward with some impetuous movement of greeting.

Paik, with the silence of determination, gave my hand a disciplinary nip, shouldered his way past me, and was the first to greet his master, as he always had been. The mate, who had been watching us, had a quiet laugh and shrugged up one shoulder as he took the crew's letters. I knew the thought behind his twinkling blue eyes—Huh! the skipper's got two of them to cope with now!

Paik was the world's most arrant snob. At sea he took no notice of anyone but the captain. In port, if the captain was ashore, he adopted the chief mate, never then going into the saloon but making his lair in the chief's cabin. If the chief also was ashore he rather disdainfully attached himself to the second mate. The third mate might pat him on the head, but Paik never deigned to enter his cabin. Of the crew he took absolutely no notice at all. How many boys would have loved to play with him and pet him, but any attempts at this were ill rewarded.

His arrogance riled a few, and a few reviled him for his personal habits. He was supposed to use the narrow strip of deck between No. 3 and No. 4 hatches, but when the ship was leaning

over it was hard for him to keep his feet on the smooth deck. He then would deposit his daily bit in a coiled-up brace. It was the best he could do, but sometimes no one would notice the occurrence before the brace had to be used.

One boy, on his way aft to give the mate the course, thought to give him, lying apparently asleep on the after-hatch, a good revengeful whack with a belaying pin slyly removed in passing. Long before the raised pin descended Paik had that boy by the throat on his back and was intent on finishing him off. Sven, seeing his purpose through the chartroom port, dissuaded him from murder.

There was nothing Paik loved better than running errands for his master. He would smile as cheerfully as only a dog can smile when asked to go below and fetch a book, a pair of slippers, a cushion or a cap. If he came with the wrong thing, the red instead of the blue book, for instance, he was sent back to get the right one. He sometimes made mistakes with the footwear which lived in a row under the narrow bedroom sofa. He would bring a slipper and a lace-up shoe.

"But Paik, I said 'slippers'! Take the shoe back and bring the other slipper."

Then he would flatten his ears, ashamedly pick up the shoe, and return in a few minutes with the other slipper.

Once in Australia, after a big party on board at which a number of other Erikson skippers were guests, the press arrived to take photographs. Sven marshalled all the captains on the fo'c'sle head, and then realized he was the only one without a cap. The caps hung in his office in the charthouse, aft, a collection varying from the gold-braided Sunday best to scarful old paint-bespattered wrecks. Paik was sent to fetch a cap but selected a plain peaked affair that looked very drab beside the guests' magnificent head pieces.

"But, Paik," he was told, "I have on my best uniform. You must get my best cap."

Paik gave a glance round at the exhibition of gold braid and was

off like a flash. The moment when he returned with the gorgeous headgear made seafaring history.

It was useless to try to teach him ordinary tricks. I daresay he would have jumped fifteen feet over barrels and so on if he had thought it was of some use. He only opened doors because he wanted to get through them, but he never bothered to shut them—because they banged shut as the ship rolled or bucketed. He adored minute and intricate games, especially one with a copper nail, which could be hidden behind some projection on deck and then sniffed out. He also liked a ping-pong ball placed on his nose because when he finally was told to toss it it behaved in much the same way as a rat, of which, in his opinion, there were far too few.

He kept armed truce with the cats, but would kill a rat on sight, giving it one lightning shake and then dropping it, no longer interested. There were never any tooth marks on the body. It would just be very limp (as the shake dislocated the spine).

Paik was never seasick, but in very bad weather, since he was unable to use the lifelines and found it hard to keep his feet, he took refuge in the kneehole of his master's desk where he glowered and snarled till the barometer rose. Otherwise he never left Sven. He was as punctual as an aide-de-camp on the daily tour of inspection, walking loftily near the skipper and sitting down as soon as he saw the stop promised to be a lengthy one. He very much enjoyed sniffing the pigs, because, I imagine, his nose sadly lacked the stimulation of animal smells. Tar, manilla, paint and varnish are hardly titillating fare for canine nostrils. Yet he never visited the pigs unless his master visited them too.

Most countries have strict regulations about animals in ships when in port, especially dogs, which in many countries are then supposed to be tied up. No country, however, is so foolish as to try to restrain ship's cats. A cat that transferred from a Valparaiso steamer in Hong Kong and then voyaged to Australia, came up to Finland in *Olivebank* and ended its days, tailless, almost bald,

but still emerald-eyed, producing its sixth litter of Finnish citizens at Pellas.

In Australian ports, where *Herzogin* was well-known, and Paik, too, regulations about dogs were never mentioned, for Paik was not to be persuaded ashore by any means, and all knew it. In Belfast an officious Irish policeman had once blustered about having the dog tied up.

"All right," said his master, "tie him up yourself, just to make sure."

This proved too hard a task for the Belfast constable and he agreed to call it a day and accept the captain's guarantee.

Curiously enough, as soon as the ship docked in Finland, Paik seemed to realize that he was a citizen, and was on and off the ship at will. Once when Sven took him on leave in the neighbourhood, he had to choose between master and ship, and to Sven's chagrin trotted back twenty miles through the forest and returned on board, where he anxiously awaited the skipper's return. Like Sven, he never slept comfortably out of his own bunk.

Paik could not talk, but he had a far more sensitive nature than many people who can. He was the reflection of his master's every mood. They were glad, sad, and anxious together; and words were seldom necessary between them. A mere look from Sven was enough. When visitors were present they often infringed the rules—they would look at him when he was under the table, or try to pat him when he was lying down. He would give them a warning bristle, then he would see in his master's eye that it was time for him to go elsewhere and he would stalk off into his bedroom or the office and remain there till the strangers had gone.

No virgin in her tower was as well guarded as Sven was guarded by Paik on board *Herzogin*, especially when he was asleep. When I was the humble Nils I was anxious to get a series of pictures—the sky asleep—the sails asleep—the sea asleep—and the skipper asleep—all typical of doldrum weather. To get

the last I risked a mauling, for I wanted the skipper genuinely asleep, lying as limp as a dead dolphin in a deck chair behind the charthouse. Paik lay crouched beside him, and every time I took a peep at them his lips drew back in a silent snarl. Approach no nearer!

The mate tried to lure him away or divert his attention. Paik's savage reply woke the skipper and we had to begin all over again. At last Sven shut him up somewhere, returned to the deck chair, and grew tense with the effort to snooze off. I did not get my limp dolphin picture that voyage.

The only time Paik grew humble was when Sven gave him a bath. He would plead piteously not to be given it, crawling in despair under the spare wheel grids, putting his nose between his paws and shutting his eyes so as not to see the horrible wooden tub and the large bit of soap all ready for him. Worse still was when his master in a tropical downpour suddenly drew a piece of soap from his pocket and started to lather him in the brimming scuppers. What matter if everyone on free watch was busy on deck, scrubbing themselves or their bedding, they all had time to jeer at his humiliation! Poor Paik, indeed! Once he was dry, with his trousers all a-fluff and every brindled hair shining, his arrogance redoubled.

This rich personality, this dog whom no one who once knew him could ever forget, was conjured out of the spoilt, savage brute that he had been by Sven's peculiar genius. When Sven set his mind to drawing the very best out of some person or thing, nothing defeated him, nothing was too much for him, and he never lost heart. He thought up all sorts of details that would add to his skill in handling whatever it was, a dog, a ship, a horse, or a woman. The more difficult and unruly they were, the deeper his pleasure was in making them do their best.

I often saw him at it with the Duchess, cajoling the very utmost out of her, when she was at her most headstrong, tossing four sweating men at her great double wheel, bouncing and lurching like a horse fighting for its head. Then he would take the wheel

alone, and with a half-smile and quiet movements of his deft hands, keep her soaring steadily on her course, while the men stood round looking at him as if he were a magician.

Probably there is some sort of steering wheel in all of us, though few find the right helmsman. I was lucky, for I too stopped bouncing and lurching and fighting for my head as soon as Sven took hold of mine. I was only too glad to share with *Herzogin* that feeling of soaring contentedly on my course.

It must be wonderful to be a well-handled barque—but it is still more wonderful to be a well-handled woman.

VIII

Swan Song

IN COPENHAGEN no farewell between ship and ship lacked the codicil "hope to see you in Port Lincoln". When I had first joined her *Herzogin* had seemed a lonely bird, shimmering there in the shallow waters off the end of the Wallaroo jetty. At the end of that voyage in Falmouth she had had *L'Avenir* for company; but the two ships riding at anchor while they waited for orders still seemed to me lonely relicts in this modern world; but in Copenhagen I began to see that they were confident and cheerful members of a merry tribe.

In Spencer's Gulf they dominated the scene. It was the steamers who crept by them, then, tail between legs, trying not to be noticed. One by one the barques pinioned in and settled off Boston Island, like a flock of gulls that foregathers to preen and gossip.

Someone was on the fore royal yard as we wafted up that January day in 1936, and shouted that there were only two in before us. *Ponape* and *Pommern* lay at anchor and we nosed in between them and came to rest within bellowing distance. Nevertheless, out came the motor boat and we chugged over for news. There was none. The world had wagged on, squabbling and distrustful, for the last seventy-nine days.

There was a horrible feeling of anti-climax. Back to *Herzogin* we chugged to await the doctor and customs. When they came I felt childishly resentful. Their resonant Australian voices and

unfamiliar footsteps rang about the deck like barbarians in a sanctuary. Sven gave them the hearty welcome he always provided for all officials and I dutifully plastered on the captain's wife's smile. For these occasions the ship provided the very cheapest French brandy (and bought by the case out of bond in Copenhagen it *was* cheap). This firewater solved many knotty problems for the ship in many a port. Once a case of it was forgotten down in the afterpeak. It was rocked three times round the world before it was discovered. In that time it had acquired the merits of good old liqueur brandy. No pilot, customs officer or doctor ever got a nip of that.

Presently it seemed quite fun to have visitors. Only Paik, glaring from his lair, continued to dislike them. In the next three weeks we were to have our fill of visitors, for we loaded in Port Lincoln and *Herzogin* brimmed over with captains and mates from the other ships as they came in for orders. There was always a bed and a meal for anyone who wanted to stay ashore. I was lost in the sea of the soft Åland drawl which I was only just beginning to master.

I did my best to help the distracted Gunnar, sweating over the menu in the fierce Australian heat. He was producing beautiful food, but quite unsuitable for that climate. It almost gave me a crop of boils to look at it. Gunnar himself was a paragon of patience and diligence. I only realized his worth when we visited some of the other ships, whose captains seemed in fear of their stewards—all except the redoubtable Nisse Erikson, who wasn't having *L'Avenir* outdone by *Herzogin* in any matter of hospitality. He seemed more enormous than ever, a mountain of solid, jovial flesh. When he felt really loving he put one arm round Sven and one round me and hugged us close, chuckling how jolly life was, in a fine ship, with lots of food and drink and the right kind of wife!

"*Hei*, Sven, what more could one want?"

He seized a couple of carnations from a vase, stuck one behind his ear and smelled the other delicately, finally, as he launched

into another topic, using it to redistribute the sweat that was cascading from his bald head. His small blue eyes twinkled in the vast red globe of his face. Sven and I peered at each other round the front of his voluminous torso. How right he was, but somehow for us life 'wasn't as simple as all that.

Nisse was one of the most efficient and trusted of the grain fleet skippers, but he did everything with the zest of a schoolboy. In spite of his girth he could run like a partridge. One biting hot noon we three were meandering down the stony incline that led to the jetty, full of iced beer as a prelude to lunch. The heat was terrific, pulsing out of a clear blue sky. Nisse and Sven each had hold of one of my arms; in their free hands each clutched a package containing more iced beer well insulated with newspaper; we were a limp, grumbling trio.

The ship lay some hundreds of yards away, shimmering beside the jetty. At the same instant both men spied a small patch of cloud that had formed on the horizon. They exchanged a piercing glance that almost grazed my nose, thrust the beer into my arms and with one tremendous whoop set off at a sprint for the vessel. Their bellows roused mates and crew from lunch, and all hands, led by the two captains, had tightened the moorings before the fierce squall hit. The rigging thrummed and moaned and the hawsers strained and creaked.

"And that," said Nisse, sipping his cold beer, "is what you've got to look out for here, same as the pampero off the River Plate. Not a sign of what's coming except that cloud—and the wind's well in front of the cloud!"

Port Lincoln boasted no tug, so that a ship broken from her moorings there was a master's nightmare. Carouse they might, and swill cold beer, and wipe the sweat away with carnations, but there was only intermittent relaxation for any of the barques' captains who loaded in Port Lincoln.

To sail his ship in, light as a cork, from the ballast grounds, was a major feat of seamanship as risky as any Horn passage. The only time I ever felt nervous in *Herzogin* was when she was caracoling

up that narrow land-locked channel, miles and miles of it, beset by sandbanks, reefs and solitary rocks awash, a maze of shoals and islands, and she as light as a rubber ball and liable to any amount of drift on only her water ballast.

We seemed to be sailing into the very heart of the Great Australian Desert, so barren it was, with the aroma of baked soil puffing out at us, and no sign of any port until we were very near it. When we had waltzed up to the jetty and made fast, without so much as a gentle graze or bump, I took a good wifely look at my husband's face. It was agleam with the pleasure of having brought it off so nicely, but that cleft of concentration at the root of his left eyebrow was deeper than ever.

One after one the ships reported in at the ballast ground until at one time there were six lying out there. This led the mayor of Port Lincoln to decide to give a dinner for the Åland skippers, and to this I was also invited.

It was stewingly hot in the little Victorian hotel, but the food was excellent; of that Australian variety that can only be described as sumptuously plain. Tender and delicious cold meats with cool salads varied the otherwise hot and savoury food, accompanied by iced beer and full-bodied Australian wines. Everyone ate a great deal, drank a great deal, and some of them talked a great deal. Soon the mayor and his henchmen were in a daze.

I too was feeling rather hazy, listening to Captain Hägerstrand's tallest stories (some of them were as tall as his own ship's masts). I was also rather deaf from Mikael Sjögren's thunderous laughter, and slightly hypnotized watching Nisse engulfing food, especially as I knew what he had already eaten at a late breakfast. It was a comfort to know that Linus Lindvall opposite, decorous and merry, was my very own brother-in-law, and that Calle Broman, so often our guest but always a little subdued, was forgetting his dignity and really enjoying himself.

In deference to our hosts everyone talked his own variety of English. It was the middle of the afternoon and high time, according to Australian manners, that the party broke up, but conver-

sation hummed on, on an ever-higher note. The Ålänings were just getting into their stride, Good food, good drink and congenial company had brought all their natural liveliness to the surface. The talk surged on, for talking was their favourite pastime. We repaired to the comforts of *Herzogin*, where a cool flow of air wafted under the poop awnings. It was dark before the last guests left. Sven smiled when I remarked that it was a lengthy lunch party.

"You don't know anything about parties," he said. "In Åland they often begin at ten in the morning and go on for several days—and all we do is just talk, and perhaps dance a little, and of course eat and drink a lot!"

No sooner talk of dancing than it seemed a delightful idea to give a dance in *Herzogin*. The signal flags cheered up the huge sailroom under the poop, and Gunnar and I set to concocting a supper. This was strictly a dance given by the captain and the mates, though in aid of a seamen's mission. Apart from visitors from other ships the guests were all Australians. I got the impression that the older ones warned the younger ones that, as this was a Finnish sailing ship, the most frightful debauchery might break out at any moment. They all seemed slightly disappointed when it didn't.

Our handsome *Förste* was the belle of the ball. Flags waved, the music jigged, and Gunnar and I spent most of the evening trying to uncurl the edges of the sandwiches which had been toasted by the hot wind from the Great Australian Desert.

Just before dawn cracked the last guest departed. It was stifling below. The air was heavy with the smell of wheat which lay in drifts on the jetty and about the decks. The rigging was full of pigeons already starting to coo. Port was fun in its way, but it was good to know that within a week we would be at sea again.

Herzogin now lay deep in the water with a tally of fifty-two thousand five hundred and fourteen bags of wheat, four thousand two hundred and ninety-five tons. Nicely trimmed, fully manned, well provisioned, and best of all with her bottom still fairly clean

because of such a short stay in port, she stood every chance of making a quick trip. With a fair wind we drew away from the jetty and sailed round to the Boston Island anchorage, but there the wind was against us and we must wait to begin the voyage to Falmouth.

The next few days were memorable. We did not know then that it was the last time such a great company of barques would foregather. While we lay waiting for a wind no fewer than seven of the fleet were anchored near us. Some were already there; some stole in in the night and were so quiet about it that only dawn disclosed them. Some came in with a flourish and the rattle of their anchor chains running out disturbed the whole company: *Viking*, *L'Avenir*, *Olivebank*, *Winterhude*, *Archibald Russell*, *Pommern* and *Penang*.

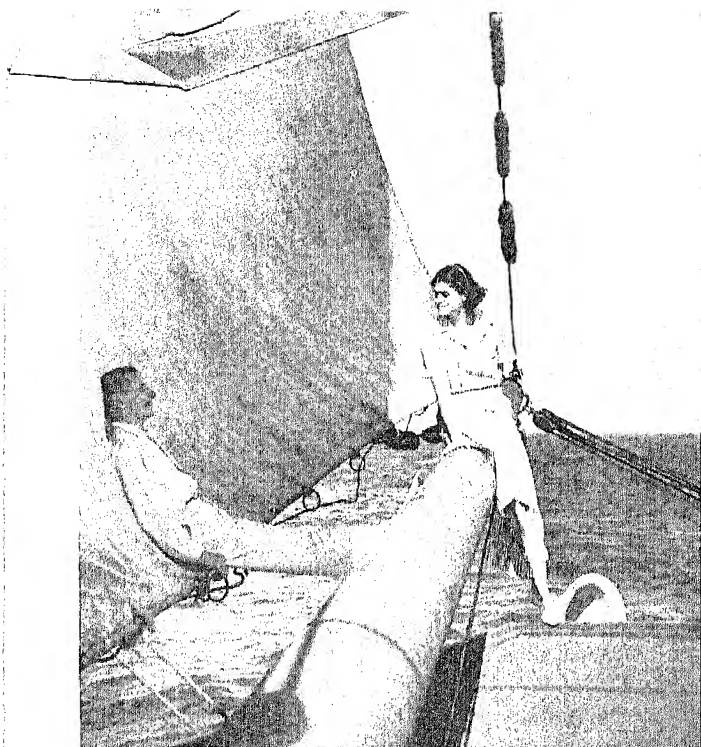
The fierce Australian heat beat down upon the old ships and warmed them, setting the water a-sparkle in the little floating town. One evening it fell calm, so calm that every rigging was clearly etched in reflection, and one could look down and spy long-beaked fish nibbling at the plates below water. Even the gulls ceased their clamour and sat supine about us, not having the energy to fly to the rigging. Across the water drifted the music of the fo'c'sles: a guitar, an accordion, a fiddle, a voice.

Before midnight all was silent, but a gentle breeze stole up and the sails, which already hung in the clew lines, were sheeted. Even the noisy windlass seemed hushed. We drifted away from the cluster of anchor lights, wrapped in night, pacing the decks in the warm gloom, thankful for the sound of air whispering on canvas, patting Paik, rejoicing in our departure. There was something so poignant in the hour that I fought back a choke of tears and fell to clearing up ropes to hide it.

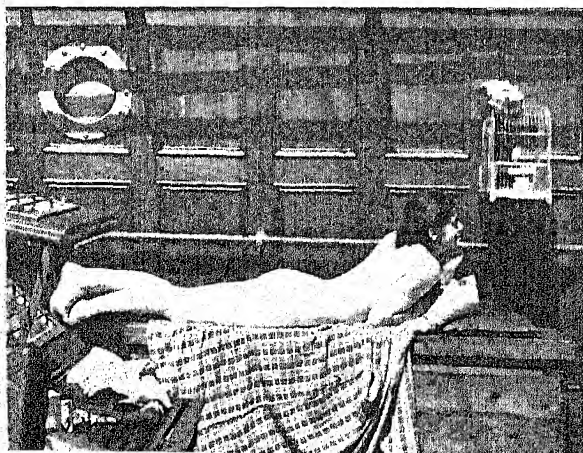
No beauty ever caught me by the throat in the same way as the beauty of a tall barque in full sail, whether wafted lightly or tearing before a brisk breeze. Only once was I able to see *Herzogin Cecilie* thus, as a spectator—a vision so lovely and so enduring that I have only to shut my eyes to see it now.



17. The Archbishop of the Sea



18. Trade wind weather, with Sven.



19. Sunbathing behind the charthouse.

It was early one morning in the Irish Sea. We put out in the motor boat to buy fresh fish from a trawler, which lay ahead of us. Silver vapour hung low on the undulating water, where no breeze blew, but she came stealing after us, her upper sails gently filled, glowing gold in the rays of the rising sun, parting the silvery vapour with her white hull, ethereal as a spirit and stately as a swan, tall and slim, trailing her burnished reflection at her feet.

We in the motor boat could not take our eyes off her. Not even Sven had ever seen a ship looking like that. The trawler men too were entranced.

"Never 'ope to see a luvlier sight," said the old chap who commanded her, "prettiest picture I ever did see. Nothing like her nowadays. No, no, I won't take no pound note for the fish. You can 'ave it and it's a pleasure. Wish you luck, sir, you and the lady."

Now, at the mouth of Spencer's Gulf, beating up and down to try and clear the islands, we were indeed in luck, for early in the morning, hull down on the south-eastern horizon, we sighted the pretty three-master, *Killoran*, coming into the Gulf, a wraith in the dancing vapour.

In the afternoon a cry from forrard caused everyone to rush on deck and gaze out over the blue waters of the Australian Bight. There, not a mile away, was a big four-masted barque bearing down upon us in full sail before a fair wind, doing her ten knots to the lilt of the summer sea. It was *C. B. Pedersen*, the training barque the Swedes used in the grain trade. Every second her beauty changed as the angle between us changed. First she was a tall stout damsel striding towards us, a real valkyrie; then abeam she became a full-bosomed matron of mature grace and beauty: as she passed astern she was transformed into a slim, elegant maiden, picking her way delicately over the waves. We were so lost in the loveliness of her that we followed her astern, walking entranced down the whole length of the poop until we fetched up against the stern rail.

Scarcely had she faded when another hail from forrard brought

us back to reality, and there, almost as if the vision were being repeated, was another four-masted barque in full sail on the same course. It was Gusta's best money-maker, the capacious old *Lawhill*, with Artur Söderlund in command. She was devoid of royals, which spoilt her looks, and when pressed she shipped water like a turtle, but in some curious way she had her captain's devotion. Then he had already been years in her, and he was to sail her for years to come. She was the only sailing ship which sailed throughout the war, and it was Artur who sailed her. When the owner sent her out in 1940, Artur insisted on taking his wife and daughter with him. In 1941, when he put into East London with a cargo, the fortunes of war had thrown Finland on the Nazi side. The South African government promptly nabbed *Lawhill*. Short of tonnage, they were forced to beg her Finnish crew to handle her; so Artur sailed happily in the southern hemisphere, and only parted from his darling when she was sold to become a hulk in 1947.

Lawhill surged past us, just out of range of our jibes, for we had left Nystad at the same time, and Sven's bet with Artur that we would meet them coming into the Gulf when we were sailing out was triumphantly won. But it was easy to imagine her skipper stamping with annoyance and growling in his half-humorous way, shaking his fist at us.

After she disappeared we settled down to the voyage in earnest, certain of no more encounters of this kind, but at four the next morning the second's voice, small and excited down the speaking tube, woke us and we rushed on deck. There was light enough to see, but the air seemed thick with a brownish fluff and sea and sky were merged.

It was the last time either Sven or I was to see a sailing ship at sea. Fifty yards away, perhaps, in the silence of a light fair wind her tall form all of one colour, an indigo, and devoid of detail, the four-masted barque *Parma* crept past us, her port lantern glowing benignly. ! As she drew abeam *Förste* rushed up half-asleep and began bellowing with all the strength of his lungs, for his brother

was the captain of this spectre. From her deck shadows a voice bellowed an answer—an incoherent exchange. Then silently she was gone. At last we were alone and heading south.

Never had the Duchess seemed so beautiful, never so trim, so well-served, never had all circumstances so combined to give her a chance to show her mettle. With luck we would make a fast trip.

On the other hand the financial situation was appalling. The freight was 25s. 6d. a ton. She had come out to Australia in ballast. A timber cargo to Africa would have made all the difference. Under Sven's command she had twice had this and had been a profitable ship. They had ruined his chances of making a fast trip up, because her bottom fouled quickly in African ports, but nevertheless, with the owner's interests always coming first, it was her profits rather than her speed which counted. She had had some expensive repairs the year before, when the donkey boiler had exploded in Belfast, twisting the upper yards of her main rigging like flower stalks: and now there was trouble impending about the collision with the trawler in Skagerrak. It would be costly to prove *Herzogin's* innocence.

We sat discussing it after dinner, the first Sunday at sea, *Förste*, Sven and I. It was a new experience for me to hear these two devoted idealists hammering away at hard financial facts. Neither of them allowed finance to play a big role in their own lives, but stuck to the ship for wages which I would blush to reveal. They could both have deserted sail for steam any time they liked.

No amount of talk would alter the unpleasant facts, so we all hoped that, as we would surely be early up in Europe, we would nab one of the timber cargoes to Africa. That would mean barnacles on her bottom, winter round the Horn, and a long passage—so it was now that the opportunity must be seized to show her paces.

The Duchess was in a good mood. Anyone could feel that. She slid easily through the water even in light airs, and as it was still summer in these southern latitudes we could hope for mostly

fine steady weather to the Horn. The crew had also shaped quite well. Thirty days to the Horn, that was the foundation of a good passage. The skipper and the mate abandoned the horrible facts of finance and fell to planning moonsails.

Her rigging would stand them, for they were to be triangular wings filling up the space on each side between her royal yard and truck. If they proved their worth on the mizzen she would have them too on the main and fore. The moonsail of clipper days was a square sail set on a yard above the skysail, but this in *Herzogin* would have been unthinkable. She already carried double tops'ls and t'gallants.

The A.B.s were all agog when they found out what sailmaker was up to. One of them tried to worm out of me "what the skipper intended". All I could tell him was that the skipper intended to try to show what *Herzogin* could do in the way of speed, now that so many circumstances were propitious.

We all knew that she had once done 365 miles in 23½ hours. That was on 5 December 1930, south of the Cape of Good Hope, under Sven's command. Few believed him when he said that he had all but equalled the James Baines' 21 knots, the all-time record claimed for sailing ships, but here are the authentic facts, quoted from W. L. A. Derby's fine book, *The Tall Ships Pass*.

"Early on the morning of Tuesday, June 2nd, 1931, *Herzogin Cecilie* encountered fog in the North Sea, but by 8.30 a.m. the wind had freshened and she stood up towards the Skaw at about 10½ knots, speed increasing in the afternoon to 13 knots. A gale warning, picked up by wireless, gave intimation of the approach of strong winds from a westerly quarter. A great horn of flat dune-fringed land pointing to the north-east forms the northern extremity of Denmark. It is known as Skagen or the Skaw, and round its tip must pass all sea traffic using the Kattegat and Copenhagen Sound. A short distance E.N.E. from this point, and marking the edge of the Skaw reef shoal, is moored the Skagen's Rev lightship, to the seaward of which runs the main channel for

vessels turning the corner. Precisely at 5 p.m. *Herzogin Cecilie* passed this position, and at 6.15 p.m. she was directly abeam another prominent landmark, the Laesö Trindel lightship. On the chart the distance between these two lights is 26 nautical miles, the Laesö bearing approximately S. 35 E. from the Skagen's Rev. To cover 26 nautical miles in 75 minutes necessitates a speed over the ground of $20\frac{2}{3}$ knots, or 34 feet per second."

I wished I had been there. I envied everyone who had seen *Herzogin* in any of her great moments. Sven's eyes glowed when he told me about this one. They had gone pounding on that night, logging seventeen knots, and although the passage of Kattegat had forced her more and more into the wind she had dashed through to Falsterbo in 13 hours from the Skaw.

I sat listening to them talking about speed and trim. It was not the talk of men with nothing else to talk about—not dreary professional gossip, but the laying of meticulous plans for the next three months. Speed—smartness—and economy——. How little I had thought ever to sit listening like this, when, two years before, I was a greenhorn all bewildered and entranced—a bit frightened of the Captain—a bit tentative with the mate!

So once more we were on our way to the Horn in *Herzogin Cecilie*, the finest sailing ship afloat—a swan, did we but know it, who was singing for us the fervent song of farewell.

A speedy passage is seldom an eventful one. Apart from our encounter with the ice in those tremendous seas which, as *Förste* said, no one would believe at home "even if you took 'em back in a bottle", night and day followed each other with hardly a split sail to distinguish them. The plotted course ate through the chart in heart-warming regular bites. With two experienced watchkeepers who knew the ship well there was really no cause for Sven to keep himself only half suspended in sleep, ever ready to flit on deck; but, like a bat, he was, from the habit of years, most alert at night. The only time I ever saw him soundly asleep at sea was on deck in the doldrums and trades.

In the westerlies he would lie dozing, relaxed, but more sensitive than the compass itself to every movement of the ship. What sound or tremor told him that something was wrong aloft or that the helmsman had wavered I never discovered, but in one swoop he would be out of his bunk, into a woollen dressing-gown and up on deck, sometimes before the mate on watch realized what was wrong. In bad weather he lay in his boots on the sofa in the chartroom office, or played endless patience, or read.

One night I woke to find myself alone. Queer gurgles could be heard, and lamplight from the saloon dulled the moonlight flooding the cabin floor. It was I now who felt that something was wrong, not with the ship, but with my husband. I too swooped out of the bunk, and into a dressing-gown, just in time to hear the sucking noise as he pulled out one of his teeth. He was hanging on to the silver rail round the marble top of the drink cupboard, looking curiously at the tooth, which he held in a pair of forceps.

"Couldn't thtand it any more, Pamie," he said thickly, noticing me. "The lath time I did it without whithky, but a molar taeth more than half a bothle. Puth me to bed now, before my kneeth go.—Whath life without a wife—tell the mate look after the thip."

I tucked him in, mopped up the blood, and then tiptoed towards the porthole with the horrid molar still held in the forceps. But before I could dispatch it he saw me and croaked,

"No-no-noononono, puth it in the lthele brath bokth in the top drawer of the dethk—where thothers are."

So it joined that mausoleum of Sven's teeth, pulled out by himself with whisky as an anaesthetic.

Presently the whistle of the speaking tube blew in my ear.

"*Kapten?*" said the mate's voice.

"*Jag kommer upp,*" I replied, trying to imitate Sven's voice.

The second looked astonished when I appeared in the chartroom, woollen dressing-gown and all.

"Look," I said, firmly, "the skipper's dead drunk. You'll have to decide for yourself."

"Nils!" he exclaimed, very alarmed. "*Helvete*——!"

It was only a couple of seconds before he twigged that though it was the truth it was not the whole truth—but those two seconds gave me an insight into what it would be like to be a wife who had ruined the skipper.

I had sworn so many secret oaths never, as a master's wife, to interfere in the workings of the ship, never to let my husband let himself be lured into spending one moment on me that should have been spent on the ship. I was very conscious of the owner's kindness and mercy in letting me sail with Sven. It was the split-second look in the second's eyes which made me renew those oaths as I left the chartroom.

We reached the Horn in thirty days and rounded it before a bountiful westerly. This died away in a mirror calm and left us tilting among a flock of penguins. Their presence made the great wastes of ocean suddenly seem homely. They gathered round the hull with friendly squawks, diving and playing and popping up right under the counter to look at us with bright eyes; a band of urchins who had lighted upon a delightful toy in their back yard. I longed for one as a pet, the bizarre and solemn little being, but I already had a small white piglet and Pelle the kitten.

"Besides," said Sven, brushing away the idea, "you've got me! Surely you prefer me to a penguin. Remember, the advantage is that I don't have to be fed entirely on fish."

Light winds drew us up towards the Falklands, to those regions where balmy mornings made the trade seem imminent, though it was still far to the north of us. The long poop deck was draped in drying sails, and it was pleasant to sit and sun oneself in the shelter of their crumpled oatmeal folds where Pelle was trying to seduce Paik into playing hide and seek. The second and I thought a run on deck would be good for my white piglet, and the canary was brought from the dim saloon by the mate, who gruffly chirped encouragement to him as he passed and repassed his sheltered corner. From the rigging where watch and daymen were bending trade wind sails, voices, exclamations, and an occasional

laugh filtered down. The smell of bread just out of the oven seeped from the galley skylight. Sven was inspecting the heavy weather canvas, strolling about over it and emanating contentment. Of such things are the memories of happiness made.

Before the courses and the topsails could be changed a south-east breeze sprang up and the daydream was over. It was not the real trade, but for us it was one of the luckiest winds that ever blew. Fresh and steady, it grew evenly in strength, crooning a hopeful song of speed in the rigging. The air filled with a bright haze. It was rather warm, and small puffs of cloud drifted so low they touched the trucks. She began to snore ahead with a steady list to port, and her wake widened to a broad white highway.

None of us who were in her then will ever forget the next three days. In the log, that most deceptive of chronicles, they were recorded dryly enough, the days, the watches, the courses, the wind's direction and Beaufort strength, the distance covered—the bare bones of a thrilling reality. In my memory they are a glorious symphony of speed, sound and beauty, a veritable ballet of the sea. I could not tear myself from deck for fear of losing one moment of it, but sought out every vantage point where one could absorb it in a different form, and so in the fullness of experience retain forever the beauty in one's own being.

There were those secret places where I had learnt one could hear the individual note of a stay or sail. I rushed from one to the other and listened, and then up onto the fo'c'sle head to stand intent with the great harp of the fore and aft stays with the headsails set thrumming above me and below the thundering surge of the bow wave.

Up on the foreyard one could drum one's fists on the foresail where it bellied up against the forestay, stiff as steel itself, and,

"Ah, dear Duchess," one would say, "here is your big secret, for your foresail, cut so skilfully, bellying up against your forestay, lifts your bows however hard you may be pressed and so you go on and on, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen knots, with hardly a ton of water swilling on your decks."

Though now the freeing ports were clanging on the well-deck, for she was heeling like a yacht. Water kept pouncing over the lee bulwarks.

Dare to climb to the fore royal yard and gaze out over the smoking prairie of the ocean, so mysteriously flat in spite of the high wind. Listen to the diapasons thundering from the forest of rigging beneath one. Hasten down the weather shrouds, like a fly crawling on a thrumming harp string, plunge into that dinning swishing tumult on the well deck where all the sediments of sound collected from above. Clamber to the fo'c'sle head again and then along the catwalk, to slither to the lee railing amidships on the poop. Here spindrift whipped up in showers on the leaning deck. The scudding hull vibrated. The white welter raged, foaming. Dizzy and soaked, I hung there in a maze, vibrating with the ship.

Under full sail, tearing at her wheel, buffeting the two, three, four helmsmen who struggled to keep her arrow-like on her course, she fled on into the night, streaming a mile-long wake behind her.

Dusk brought no slackening of the wind, and as night fell the whiteness of churned water and spray glowed with green fire—a glistening flurry hurled aside by this hurtling comet. The wake spread out enormously to an iridescent tail. When the moon rose, the phosphorescence dimmed but instead the air was filled with a pale glow as the moonbeams tangled in the vapours.

Watch succeeded watch. One threw oneself down for a few minutes' rest on hatch or chest, aware of the moon swaying giddily above the royals even through one's eyelids. Moonlight merged into dawn, and the moon and a planet hung briefly in the pink-flushed haze. Suddenly the sun tottered up, trembling above the ocean's rim. With its first shafts the wind seemed to gather vigour, and with a shudder the ship increased her speed to a reckless hurtle. Everyone's mind was on the patched fair-weather canvas, still holding on the upper yards.

Sixty in a watch?—Sixty in a watch?—the murmur drifted about the decks.

The mate drank his coffee in smoking gulps.

"What a ship, Nils! What a ship! What a ship!"

The skipper was silent, both hands on the taffrail, gazing into the eye of the wind. One heard him tapping the barometer. Then he materialized beside the mate.

"Get those moonsails on her, *styrman!*" he said, quietly.

All that day, all that night, and the next day too, the great blow continued. Hourly it grew warmer as we chased up the latitudes. The steadiness of the gale, the flatness of the sea, the tireless response of the ship, kept what talk there was staccato with exclamations.

There was no savour in food, no quenching in drink, no rest in sleep. We were all wrapt in the ship and existed thrillingly in this her fulfilment: for this she had been conceived. I looked at the mates' faces and at Sven's—for this had they been born and bred; for this I too was mysteriously here—the still small voice of consciousness.

It was the swan song, not only of the ship, but of an era—the era when man respected the elements and rejoiced in his power to harness them—man still comparatively innocent, not yet tempted to pick apart the universe.

At the third dusk the tension eased. The smoke cleared from the sea, the sky grew limpid, the wind fell. To us it seemed sluggish, bowling along at ten knots before the genuine trade. But she reeled off the miles without a pause. We made the Line in fifty-five days.

A different mood now prevailed on board. It was the same furnishing fever which reigned in every Åland home for several weeks before Christmas. I was next to encounter it at Pellas, and in the fury of scrubbing and painting and polishing which then seized the Eriksson household, was scarcely aware whether it was Christmas or Falmouth we were expecting.

Fifty-five days to the Line seemed to have its drawbacks. The

afterguard now thought of nothing but co-ordinating to a triumphant finish all the deck jobs which had been progressing, from chipping to red-leading, to coats one, two and three, since the trip began. The ship was a patchwork mess. The whole rigging had yet to be painted, and the skipper suddenly announced that the coffered ceiling of the saloon must be re-enamelled. The pulse of the ship beat strongest in the paint locker, where the final hues for masts, yards, ventilators, capstans and winches were decided by the skipper, with one eye on beauty and the other on available paint. A tragedy it would be, indeed, if the rigging had to be finished off in a lighter shade of fawn, or if each ventilator did not echo the exact azure tint of its fellow.

Fired by this vast artistic scheme I suggested that the capstans would look well in aluminium.

"All right, you do it—and paint the flag on top in Finnish colours."

"And what about the Duchess?"

"It will only take you a day to touch her up this time."

As she nosed north competition sharpened between the port and starboard watches, for each worked on their own side of the ship. At first she was in such a mess and there seemed to be so much to do that everyone flagged, disheartened. But once the shrouds and stays were tarred down the Falmouth fever mounted. A few days before we were likely to sight Lizard she was all but ready.

I shared with Sven a wonderful feeling of satisfaction. Not only was she beautiful to look at. She was in good fettle down to the bottom layer. There were no kingdoms of hidden rust concealed by daubs of paint. No forgotten hidey-holes of dusty junk. Everything that could be washed and swept had been washed and swept, everything that could be painted was painted.

It was a delight to walk about her with no other object than to love and admire her; to look up into the rigging and blink at the glitter of the stays and run the eye up the tall even columns of the masts; to pass one's hand over the smooth new-varnished teak,

to sniff the scent of cleanliness that was about her, on deck and below; to laugh at the absurd prettiness of the once dowdy capstans, now glowing so silvery with the merry Finnish flag embossed on top; to stroll up on to the fo'c'sle head and peer over at *Cecilie* herself, gay in her red, yellow, silver and black; to turn round and see before one the whole long gleaming speckless body of the ship, and to know that all this was not only show, but a visible sign of her splendid condition and seaworthiness.

"And now," said Sven, "when we anchor in Falmouth those ——— journalists will come aboard and ask me silly questions about winning a grain race and not one of them will notice anything of *this*!"

It was true. The English press had created this figment of a grain race, and stuck to it year after year. It was a form of nostalgia, an absurd, idiotic, but rather lovable nostalgia for their own long-rejected clippers which, with tea and wool, had once really *raced home across the world to catch the season's first markets*. I had always felt sorry for the men of the press, struggling to satisfy the public's sentimentality, and given only the dry logbook remarks which most Åland captains saw fit to deal out to them.

The English are a contradictory race. Though they lavished heartfelt sentiments on the Åland barques and the character-building results of a training in sail, though they still thought of themselves as a nation of sea-dogs, and expected the skill and quality from their own seafarers which all admitted could only be developed in sail, not one of their great marine enterprises could be persuaded to spend a few thousands a year to run one training ship in even the modest style of *Herzogin Cecilie*.

As the north-east trade died Sven made a thorough inspection of the rigging. Paik glared with envy at me as I followed him up the ratlines and started to bark jealously as we reached the futtock shrouds. I sat lazily in the mizzen top while Sven moved slowly about, a battered solar topee on the back of his head. He didn't seem anxious to talk, not even to comment on what he

was doing, so I barked down derisively at Paik and started a snarling match with him. Tiring of this I began to watch Sven again.

Before I could formulate the impression of something unusual he came sidling along the yardarm and pointed upwards. What *was* in that smile he gave me?—Something sad?—Something cosy?

I found another perch and cogitated while he went slowly from yard to yard. By the time he had reached the lower t'gallant I was beyond all reason, for it seemed to me that Sven was *flowing* about the rigging, very slowly, very intently, as if all his mortal forces were seeking to absorb some essence that lay locked in steel and rope.

We proceeded to the main, and then to the fore. A few words wafted between us but did not break the spell. The inspection was over and we leant at leisure on the foreyard, watching the bow wave crumpling white under the jib-boom.

"She should last another thirty years," said Sven, "kept as she is now."

There was a pause. Then he said with that same sad yet cosy smile,

"Would you like a year ashore? We could have a wonderful holiday in Åland—at Pellas."

"Hush, Sven," I said, "don't let Cecilie hear you."

But the thought of not having to share him with the Duchess gave me a delightful though guilty feeling. Could it even be that she was loosening her grip on him, that I might even become more than the second-best wife. Fanciful thought! She was as proud and possessive as ever, swaggering into the westerlies, sleek and confident in the pale spring sunlight.

It was as well neither of us knew when we would next be together in the rigging.

A little after this I woke one night to the sound of a stifled high desperate voice in my ear.

"She's on the rocks! Look! Look! Look! She's on the rocks,

the rocks!" Sven was groaning in his sleep. I shook him hard. Even as he woke he murmured "Rocks!" but when I asked him what he had been dreaming about, he couldn't remember.

"For godsake don't eat apples after midnight," I admonished. "Naturally they gave you nightmares."

"But they're so nice ——" he said drowsily. "We really must plant some good eating apples at Pellas. Even if it's only for the children to steal. When I was a boy we always pinched them because they tasted better."

About this time, too, the mate had a queer dream. It convinced him that we were going to get that longed-for timber cargo, because, he said, the big black cliff he saw so close to the ship couldn't have been anywhere else except in a Norwegian fjord.

"Only in the fjords could she lie so close," he repeated. In his dream he had stood on *Herzogin's* deck and the black cliff had loomed above him.

It was now apparent that we would reach Falmouth in under ninety days—perhaps even equal or beat the only other under-ninety passage in the post-war grain fleet, *Paima's* eighty-three days under Ruben de Cloux. But a spell of bad weather delayed us, though we were under full sail again when we picked up the Bishop Rock, exactly in that small segment of the horizon where Sven had calculated it would be. After a long voyage, with no chance to correct the chronometers, to find one's navigation so correct was highly satisfying.

Eighty-six days from Boston Island we anchored in Falmouth Bay to await orders.

Part Four

THE END OF THE DUCHESS

IX

The Channel

IT WAS Sven's habit when he anchored in Falmouth Bay, to pay his respects to *Cutty Sark*. On this April day she was etched faintly against the pastel sky; beautiful still, but lying there year in and year out, tethered between the arms of the land, she was as forlorn and mummified as a butterfly impaled in a matchbox.

Captain Dowman, who had rescued her from dilapidated oblivion with the Portuguese, had luckily had the means to still the ache in his own heart by preserving her thus. He had never served in her, but once, in his early days at sea, he had seen her ramping in full sail. This vision remained with him until both he and she were old and met again, when one day she crept in for shelter to Falmouth Bay, while tramping for the Portuguese—so altered that only a loving and knowledgeable eye could recognize her in that travesty of her former splendid self.

My heart ached too to see this heroine of the clipper breed, even though restored to something of her outward state, so passive, so lifeless, so evidently an old, old lady existing on long past her vanished generation. Nevertheless, she lay there, a visible example of the profound influence a ship can have on a man.

Beside the elegant little *Cutty Sark*, *Herzogin Cecilie* was a swash-buckling newcomer. But as I looked back at her from the motor-boat I felt again that pang of love for her which all the clipper's airy loveliness could not arouse. Her towering majestic rig, a-blur with tackle, was tolling gently as she rode to her anchor on a cross swell countering the wind.

I breathed a heresy in Sven's ear.

"I think she's just as beautiful in her way as *Cutty Sark*!"

"Maybe," he said, "and if she ever got a wool freight she might come up from Australia in the sixties, too."

However, neither crack voyages nor clippers were uppermost in our thoughts as we neared the harbour. Apart from interest in the post and the probable order port we were maundering over the prospect of a visit to Woolworths.

Sven was only one of the many Erikson captains who made a beeline for this sixpenny glory store on arrival in Falmouth. To anyone who had not shopped for many months and so was out of all sorts of odds and ends, both personal and household, a browse over those display counters was like a drink in the desert. Nothing like them then existed in Scandinavia. In Mariehamn the shops were still very old-fashioned, with most of their goods in drawers and cupboards, waiting to be asked for. I had heard Sven recounting to his mother and sisters the joys of Woolworths, and Mery had remarked that if ever she got as far as England, Woolworths was one of the sights she *must* see.

Ranking in importance with Woolworths was a meal of fresh food at the King's Hotel. Into the eating of this—usually roast beef and potatoes with two veg., apple tart, biscuits and cheese—Sven managed to imbue a ritualistic deliberation. Contrary to his habits on board he would eat these symbolic viands with slow enjoyment, indulging also in a bottle of wine. But to the waiter's dismay he would top it up with a pint of fresh milk, drunk with no heel taps.

I smiled serenely at the illusions of his crew, who imagined their skipper as a man who could drink anyone under the table and made a habit of it, too. Though on several occasions I had seen Sven do this with masterly aplomb, he preferred, if he was not forced to keep up appearances and could get the genuine stuff, plain, fresh milk!

So passed the last unburdened day we were to spend for many months. By four o'clock the orders had come. We were to pro-

ceed to Ipswich! That meant sailing up Channel. Sven had done this, once before in 1933, when he had a cargo to London.

There had just been time to get in touch with a dear friend of mine who lived in Devon, hustle her to Falmouth and into the motor-boat. Diana and I kept up a magpie chatter while Sven at the tiller smiled benignly at us. It had fallen calm.

As we approached the ship a great tide of happy exhilaration welled up in me. I felt the onset of my besetting weakness, which Sven called "getting drunk on your own high spirits." I whirled Diana down to the saloon and then jiggled her into the smartest passenger cabin to settle herself and unpack.

When I returned to the saloon Sven had just come down from deck. I leapt at him and gave him a tremendous bear hug, tossing his cap in the air and ruffling his newly-cut hair.

"If you feel like that you'd better run up to the fore royal and loosen the gaskets!" he said.

"But surely we're not sailing tonight?"

"Yes, we are," he replied, "there're light airs coming from the south-west and it will freshen in an hour or so."

As he said this another tide rose in me, dark and threatening. Urgent and imploring, words tumbled out of me.

"Don't sail tonight. Please, Please, Sven, don't sail tonight!"

"Good heavens, Pamie, what's come over you? If the wind is fair, naturally I must sail."

Nothing I could say would alter him, for I could name no possible reason for continuing to lie at anchor off St. Anthony's Head; but even though I felt guilty at breaking my resolve never to try to interfere with the working of the ship the clamour in me would not be stilled.

I went on begging him, even going as far as crouching at his feet and holding on to his legs to prevent him going on deck to give the order. He made short work of that encumbrance, using his abnormal strength to untwine my arms kindly and gently. Lifting me up he whipped out a clean handkerchief and made me blow my nose into it.

"There!" he said, mopping my face and giving me a grandmotherly kiss. "Cheer up and don't be an idiot!"

So at 8.20 p.m. we got under way. I remember how the stars blinked and the lights of Falmouth swayed in the undulant water. We stood out on the starboard tack, to pass a few miles to the east of the Manacles. Very soon the haze thickened and we passed through patches of light fog. The breeze continued steady south-west and the sea moderate.

I knew it would be a long alert night for Sven, the first of several before we would reach Ipswich. He had excused himself to our guest after supper, and during the evening was visible only as a figure poring over the table in the chartroom, a shape poised before the standard compass, or looming beside the helmsman.

After ten Diana grew sleepy and went to bed. I took a couple of turns up and down with Sven, planning to stay up all night, too, but my yawns betrayed me, and he sent me down to bed too. It was not yet eleven; at about eleven-thirty the fog thickened and our hand-turned foghorn started its weak bray from the fo'c'sle head. I must have slept deeply at once, for I never heard it.

Sounds can be terrible in their implications. What woke me just before 4 a.m.—those eight bells which were never struck—was not a very loud or terrifying sound, but a sound unknown to me. Nevertheless it was a sound grim, fearful, impregnated with disaster; for as her bows thudded into the Ham Stone rock, the Duchess uttered a grating, harsh, metallic groan, like some great buck as a bullet fells him.

The sound had faded before I was fully conscious and on deck. A huge black something loomed on the port bow through the heavy shroud of fog. Somewhere in that direction, too, the sea was hissing and seething breathily. Muffled orders and cries echoed in the gloom. I heard Sven's voice, sonorous and calm.

Then she struck again with a horrible, lurching jolt, and the sea sucked and sighed round her.

Like lightning, sudden disaster branded the air. Shrieking gulls, flapping sails, pounding running feet, shouts to let go the

starboard braces—all had calamitous undertones. I was caught up in a nightmare of dank air and clammy ropes, automatically obeying the orders that were being rapped out along the deck.

We had struck and lost way.

The desperate activity came to a sudden stop in a tremor of suspense. Everyone hugged the thought that she might clear the obstruction, whatever it was, gain way, and extricate herself—but the wind was too light and too southerly.

The fierce order to let go anchor and clew up shattered the tension. Even with everyone desperately quick it took time to clew up all those sails, and every moment they were pressing her nearer the shore. For shore it was: gulls screeched their lament incessantly as they flurried in the gloom from the rock to the cliffs, protesting against this night intruder.

I ran towards where I could hear Sven and he came towards me out of the fog. He spoke low and quick.

"Go down and tell Diana to get on deck. Then as quick as you can, Pamie, shut all the portholes, starboard side first. Don't be frightened. Nothing much will happen for a bit."

"Where are we, Sven?"

"I don't know. Where we shouldn't be!"

So we turned quickly from each other and did what had to be done. As I screwed fast the last porthole, gulping for breath, I tried to judge whether the list was increasing, whether she would capsize, whether it would be possible to scramble up the midships companionway before she did.

Then I remembered the third mate who ought to have been lying in his cabin, not able to walk, his leg having been caught in the running braces some time before and seared.

I found him struggling to get on deck. Sven was in the chart-room, checking the course, trying to find out where we could be. The mate was below, sounding the bilges.

"The anchors won't hold," Sven said. "We've swung round by the stern and are fast on something."

Förste appeared with the news that she was making water, but

very slowly. Mate and captain looked at each other. I don't remember that more words passed between them, but presently *Förste* was sending up flares and rockets aft of the jigger mast.

They shed an eerie light on us, revealing the disarray of clewed sails, untrimmed yards, and the young awed faces of the crew, clustered round the charthouse.

That now there was nothing else to be done irked everyone. We were all used to obeying orders instantly, but now there were no orders, except to the mate :

"Light another one!"

The fog was now lessening. Through it, too, the first dawn light was filtering. One of the Danish boys stepped up to the mate, said something to him, and glanced at Sven. He wanted to be allowed to swim ashore, seeing that the rockets drew no response, to try to find out where we were and get help.

"All right, Larsen," said Sven. "it's only about two hundred feet. If you're a good swimmer——" and he smiled at the manly alert face of the young Dane. I wondered how he could draw forth such an understanding smile from the depths of his own dismal predicament. Larsen threw his coat and boots off and jumped in.

Meanwhile, unknown to us, a coastguard at Hope Cove had seen our distress signals. Scarcely had Larsen returned with the news that he could find no way up or round the cliff than a light was winking at us and a voice dinning faintly from the brow of the cliff.

"Who are you? Are you all right? Salcombe lifeboat is coming."

"Four-masted barque *Herzogin Cecilie*, hard and fast since four a.m."

Though we did not know it then, he must have been as glad of our reply, as we of his shout, for seeing us dimly there, a vision from an age gone by, he had doubted his own senses. Might this not be the wraith of the tea clipper *Hallow-e'en*, which had driven ashore on this same spot fifty years before. Bolt Head it was, and the rock was the Ham Stone.

The name came filtering down to us. Bolt Head! We should have been at least eight miles out in the Channel from Bolt Head!

Sven and the mate shook their heads over the chart. The most puzzling thing of all was that we had neither heard nor seen Eddystone, though to come where we were we must have passed close to the great lighthouse. The helmsman held to his story that the compass had oscillated violently a minute or so before she struck. This was one of the several mysterious elements which were never explained.

The mate gazed at the great black mass of Bolt Head as its details formed in the growing light.

"And I thought it was Norway!" was all he said.

"On the rocks! She's on the rocks!"—the echo of Sven's nightmare came back to me.

Poor Duchess—she had done her best to warn us all. The night before, in a last desperate effort, she had used me. "Don't sail, Sven. Please, please don't sail."

Now, impaled upon the horns of fate, we were all three aware of what had taken place, and faced with the mysterious question of how the disaster had happened, felt bewildered and dumb. But the sorrow I felt for the wretched ship, lying there so helpless and humbled, was as nothing beside the grief I felt for Sven, knowing as I did that *Herzogin* and her well-being was the main-spring of his life.

In the face of disaster the hardest of all tasks is to wait. Everything that could be done had been done. She seemed to be lying on a reef, filling only slowly. As the tide rose she began to squirm, being still buoyant: that could only mean one thing. She was holed but the hole was not large.

Sven believed that if he could get tugs quickly enough to pull her off he could keep her afloat, using sails as collision mats and working every pump. He had shouted to the coastguard to contact what tugs he could.

But it was not a tug which first put in an appearance from the Channel side. Out of the grey dimness of the misty morning

appeared a traditional vision which was as much part of the English coast as Bolt Head itself: a lifeboat, dauntless and sturdy, the crew in full rescue rig. The Salcombe men who manned it had steeled themselves for a perilous rescue. The coast that stretched between Bolt Head and Salcombe estuary was notorious, for the bones of wrecked ships lay thick upon it. They had come searching through the mist for some pathetic steamer, crumpled up against the rocks. They were dumbfounded to find a four-masted barque, resting apparently intact and so conveniently placed that it was possible to lie alongside as if she were a wharf.

There followed a long deliberation as to what was best to be done. The broad Devon accents rolled and burred in counterpoint to the clipped Swedish lilt. The lifeboat men had their own local wisdom of this savage coast, and would have preferred to remove every living body out of the ship at once.

"If the sea should get up more——" they warned. But the sea only sucked and sighed round us, mournful and enigmatic, unable to disclose what lay in store for its victim.

At last Sven turned to the crew and gave everyone the option of staying on board or going ashore in the lifeboat. Twenty-one men chose the lifeboat. The eight who elected to stay were the captain, the chief and second mates, three Danes (including Larsen), and a big burly Ålänning, Runar Ekblom, and myself. Three Finns and a German returned to us within the next two days.

The coxswain was anxious to be gone, for the sea was beginning to shoulder in, splashing up over the tell-tale Ham Stone. At the last minute, Sven knotted various ship's papers into a pink blanket, the only thing I could lay hands on, and lowered them into the boat, waving her off as he did so. The powerful motor broke into a throb, and with cheerless farewells she left us, promising to return if the weather deteriorated.

The eight of us stood as if spellbound, watching her disappear in the swell along the rugged coast. The tide was almost full, and the ship ground sickeningly in the rocky vice which gripped her

somewhere amidships. All of us remembered how she could fight and triumph in the perils of storm, so that now her feeble and helpless condition filled us with pity and a sort of shame. So attuned to Sven that I could feel the burthen of his complex thoughts wrestling with all his black problems, I waited like the others to be told what to do.

In the face of disaster a shipmaster's conduct is ruled by tradition, which itself is founded on common sense. First he does what he can for the safety of his ship, secondly he sees to the safety of his crew, thirdly he does his best to minimize the owner's loss. For Sven there was no comforting thought that this would be small. Few modern masters have experienced the terrible feeling of losing a ship that is uninsured. There was yet another spectre walking through his thoughts. Though *Herzogin* was not insured, her cargo was, and therefore the underwriters would insist upon the salving of the cargo at the expense of the ship, for whom there was no champion.

He turned from the rail and told the mates and boys to get the crew's baggage on deck in the hope of somehow sending it ashore and so saving the owner compensation. Our own motorboat had been smashed just after she struck, when water had poured over the main deck. They all tramped forrard, glad to be busy.

For Sven there was the much more trying task of staying on deck to keep watch for any change in the ship's situation, for now, with high water, she was far from stable. He took my elbow and we retreated behind the charthouse. Retreat it was, for both of us needed a few moments of privacy.

"If you had gone in the lifeboat it would have been better for you," he said. "I should have made you go."

"I'll go when you go, Sven," I said. "What's a wife for except to help make the best of it."

"It will be hard and perhaps very dangerous."

"Not more so for me than for you."

There was a pause.

"What a marvellous thing it is that you should be here."

I scarcely heard him. We were both gazing at the stern, barren face of Bolt Head, graceless, forbidding and hostile. My eyes began to swim and all grave thoughts fled. If the ship must be abandoned—and all over that black cliff the words seemed to be written—it seemed to me that there would be no joy left for Sven in life. I burst out that it would be best for us both to end that life here and now.

He looked at me with a wealth of love and wisdom in his drawn face.

"Ah," he said, sighing. "It seems black now, but remember there are other things, both for you and for me——"

To control myself I stared hard at one place on the cliff, and as I stared, I realized I was looking at something that was neither black nor graceless nor hostile; for there, clinging in a sheltered cranny, was a cluster of sea pinks, shimmering delicately in the morning sunlight. With renewed courage I hastened below to pack our gear.

During the morning hours two tugs appeared some distance out, but refused to come near, judging our position hopeless. An aeroplane circled us, dipping low over our masts. On the cliff the little group of coastguards swelled with sightseers.

The news that the galley was flooded even at half tide cut out any idea of hot food. We made do with whisky and biscuits, sitting all eight of us in the saloon, trying to be cheerful and not succeeding.

In the afternoon back came the lifeboat, eager to remove all of us and have done with it. The coxswain relayed what the tug skippers had said, and vowed that no tug would ever risk herself so close to shore.

"Don't worry about us, coxswain," said Sven, and one of the Danes grinned down at the men in the boat and repeated

"Don't hurry. All vi *Herzogin* folk svim like fis."

"And the lady, sir?"

"The lady swims like a fis, too," I said.

It was easier to be cheerful before strangers.

When the coastguards saw the lifeboat leaving without us, they began to stir on the cliff and shout down at us. The mates and boys were busy making fast sail in the fore rigging; Sven and I suspected that the coastguards too were unwilling to leave us isolated for the night. We soon saw what they were up to, for they fired a rocket which landed accurately in the mizzen rigging, trailing a long thin line from there to the cliff.

I was now heartily glad that I knew something of a seaman's skill, for I was able to help Sven set up the breeches buoy in the jigger rigging. It seemed to take hours, heaving and hauling, and finally, when we had got it all fast and shipshape, the running gear was not clear. Sven insisted on going over to test it while I stood by in the rigging to see that the ropes didn't chafe.

It was very cold and damp and the rigging shivered a bit as it does in a gale. Sven was a mere spider bundle in mid-void, but after several jerks and stops he finally reached the cliff and disappeared in a cluster of figures. The mate came up and joined me, and presently the buoy came back and I was in it, dangling in mid-air.

Only when I looked back at her from the cliff did I realize how terrible was *Herzogin's* plight. She was deep down by the head, with a considerable list to starboard, and looked as if she might slip into deep water at any moment. Claws of rock clutched at, her stern, even above water. The tragedy of it must have shown on my face, for there was a strange look in people's eyes when they rather timidly came up and spoke to me. I was astonished to recognize it as awe.

"Ave some brandy, dear," said a cockney, not to be entirely subdued, but taking out a hanky and wiping the mouth of the flask.

"We had whisky for breakfast, and whisky for lunch, because the galley is flooded," I said. "Now if you had a sandwich to give me——"

Immediately the spell was broken. Here was some way of

showing their sympathy. Sven and I ate our fill of stodgy English sandwiches, and they crammed the rest into our pockets to take back to the men in the ship. So began our relations with the great English public. Sometimes I was proud to have a share of English blood—sometimes I was bitterly ashamed.

That was a mournful and racking night, moonless, and cloudy enough to conceal the strength of the swell which, as high water was reached, belaboured the hull as it heaved over the forepart of the ship. Like some half-paralysed animal she writhed and jerked in the vice of rock, groaning, half-awash, a ghastly sight in the glare of the coastguards' searchlight, which once in a while swept anxiously over us.

Captain and mates divided up the night between them, each keeping their watch alone. There was not much sleep for the seven below, trying to obey the Captain's orders.

"Get what sleep you can," he had said. "If the position becomes too hopeless we can always use the breeches buoy."

Then, seeing the four boys looking so solemn, so fatigued, and so very young, he added with a grim grin:

"Nå, pojkar, så är sjöman's livet!"

What a depth of meaning there was in that simple Swedish phrase, and in the way Sven tossed it at them. Translated it would read, "Well, lads, such is a sailor's life," but in those English words is nothing of the indomitable acceptance of the inevitable, the indefatigable challenge to the unpredictable—but let the untranslatable remain untranslated. Suffice to say that it put a spark into the boys' tired eyes, a swagger in the mates' walk, and worked its magic too on me.

Cold and tension lengthened the night. We lay huddled aft, with muscles tensing every time the hull wrenched more desperately than usual. The sweat had drenched and dried too many times that day in clothes that were now harsh and clammy, unable to hold the warmth from our devitalized bodies.

Förste and I lay foot to foot on the narrow curved settee in the saloon, listening to the faint thud of Sven's footsteps as he walked the deck above us. We did not try to sleep but lay very still, grunting intermittent remarks at each other.

She would hold—yes—but the wheat would swell and swell—there was at dusk only one small sign of strain, at the base of the main mast—but storm might finish her—no money—it would take money to get the wheat out of her quickly—and what of the underwriters?—we need a diver—I don't think she's badly holed—with the help of a diver we might patch her up, pump her out, beach her somewhere, jettison the blasted wheat—if only the galley didn't flood at high water—those Danes were good boys—and the burly Runar——

There was silence.

"Hei, *Förste*, are those cold clammy lumps your feet?"

"I was wondering myself how you got yours warm."

"It's only my feet," I said, "the rest of me is Noah's wife's bottom."

I sat up, and seizing one of the cold clammy lumps started to massage it vigorously.

Förste lay supine, but his teeth started to chatter.

"Wrrrrrrrrrh! Women aren't so bad when they know what to do—when!"

I glowed. It was the greatest compliment he had ever paid me. I ignored the fact that it was wrung from him when he was in very low spirits. I worked on those two feet of his till they were as cosy as two tabbies, and I myself warm and sleepy. So sleepy that what next woke me was—two cold clammy lumps touching my soles.

This time they were Sven's. It must be after midnight. It was the first time he had lain down for over forty hours. He did not even open his eyes when I started to rub his feet. but said very clearly,

"The sea's lessening. The night will soon be over."

"Hope cometh with the dawn," I murmured, never having felt more deeply the truth of those hackneyed words.

Much beside hope came also with the dawn—Customs men, salvage men, Lloyds men, press men; the motor-boats throbbed round Bolt Head all that Sunday. The cliff grew black with sightseers. They had plenty to watch. All the personal baggage was being slung up to the cliff by the breeches buoy tackle. It was a shabby, pathetic little heap when the coastguards finally assembled it, but that didn't stop some of the sightseers helping themselves.

Everyone who came aboard had a great deal of talk in them, fussy, nervous, pessimistic. The Customs men were the worst.

They were unused to dealing with deep-water men and ships, for Salcombe was visited only by yachts and coasters. They lacked, too, a saving spark of imagination, and behaved as if we had purposely stranded ourselves at Bolt Head to land contraband. Smuggling has been a popular excitement on the Devon coast for hundreds of years, but in our plight we had forgotten that, so tempers were short.

They began by making a thorough search of the ship wherever they could penetrate dry shod. The few bottles of drink and meagre store of cigarettes left over from the trip they sealed up with gusto.

This was the first time that I had seen the English from the foreigner's point of view. It gave me a shock. They had the attitude reminiscent of the Judaic, that disease, filth, malpractices and black magic are the characteristics of all foreigners. On the strength of this they slaughtered my pet white piglet and threw him overboard, where his plump, pink, pathetic corpse drifted round the ship for hours.

Then they hounded the cats.

"But ships' cats," both Sven and I protested, "have the freedom of the world! Nowhere anywhere do port authorities bother their heads about ships' cats."

But lust for power and blood had gripped the Customs men. The health of the British Isles might be endangered if the ship should break up and the cats swim ashore. Those little peak-

capped men standing on the gaunt deck of the ship had but one thought—to do their duty in the face of this monstrous threat.

Pelle purred in my arms, blinking serenely at them.

"No, madam, we can't allow you to keep the cats!"

"Well," I said, struck to the heart over this small matter, "for heaven's sake don't kill them on board. Take them ashore and get something quick and painless from the chemist."

The cats were boxed, and the man who had said the least, stretched out his arms and took the box. His poker face expressed nothing, but I imagined I saw a gleam in his eye.

"And now, Captain, you can't keep that dog here——"

Paik looked at them with shrewd hazel eyes. He had kept within a few feet of Sven ever since we struck, aware of calamity, worried, anxious, often looking up into his master's face, and if he got an answering glance, wagging his tail with subdued sympathy. A vial of pure devotion and love was Paik, giving that, which was all he had.

"Paik," said Sven, "has not been ashore or had contact with other dogs since September 1935."

"It's against the regulations. If the ship breaks up and he gets ashore——"

"Paik," said Sven, and in his voice was cold menace to all pettifogging officials, "is not going to be slaughtered."

There was silence. The cats mewed in their box.

"Come," I said, bitterly aggravated. "Cut all our throats and have done with it. Then you'll be sure that dear England won't be contaminated."

As if roused from her stupor, *Herzogin* shuddered feebly, and ground her bones on the reef.

The Customs men retreated hastily to the railing, alarm shrivelling their persistence. They scrambled into their boat muttering "break-up—quarantine—savage dog—responsibility—prohibited."

Sven smiled sombrely at them, raising his hand in farewell. Then he turned away.

"*Djävla karlar!*" he said, "they didn't even leave me out a bottle to soften them up with!"

"The — — — buggers!" growled the mate, in loud English, which he hoped would reach the boat. He had stood in the back-ground, legs widespread, hands deep in pockets, small determined chin thrust in the air.

We achieved a meal that day, a cold potage of something called "Mother Betty's Cottage Dinner" which a passenger had left in a cabin, and asparagus tips, green peas and crab, all from tins from which sea water had removed the labels. It was washed down with three-star Martell.

"I yoost," said Sven, lapsing into English with a strong Åland accent, "broke their leetle seals."

Some time during that morning a tug of impressive bulk hove in sight and lay well out from us while her captain came aboard. She was the big German salvage tug, *Seefalke*, stationed at Queens-town.

The talk Sven had with her master was marked by a profound intimacy, though they had never met before. Each knew that the other was an expert in his own sphere, and they assessed every fact of the situation with nice precision—but these all boiled down to the cold financial one that salvage on a "no cure no pay" basis was all Sven could offer and the *Seefalke* could not accept that. They disagreed too over the difficulties of the job. *Seefalke's* master judged that it would be very difficult. Sven held to his opinion that the main thing would be to get the wheat out of her quickly and the rest would be easy.

The other shook his head and with a firm handshake they parted. His broad square back was soon just part of a blob on the water. He was careful not to glance back at *Herzogin*. Perhaps he did not care, or perhaps he cared too much. He must have seen many sad sights in his profession, but probably none sadder than this.

The only communication Sven as yet had from the owner was a cable, "Save crew's baggage". A sour grimace was his only com-

ment on this, for it seemed to him to be driving the famous policy of "*ekonomie*" too far. The baggage had already been saved, so he read between the lines and took it to mean that he must save as much gear as possible. He set about doing this at once, for already on that Sunday morning mates and crew were busy taking up the spare canvas on deck and a lighter from Salcombe was ordered for Monday to ferry the first load of gear ashore.

All that day Sven was constantly harassed by importunate landmen. There was no means of keeping them off the ship, or distinguishing from the merely curious those who had legitimate business with him. The parties of journalists were fairly amenable. They soon saw that the captain was a man of few words, and I was able to lure them off, and conduct them along the catwalk above the swirling water on the foredeck, where they could quite harmlessly take pictures of me hovering somewhere on the jibboom. Constitutionally unphotogenic, dirty, dishevelled and hollow-eyed as I was, I felt sure that these would never appear in the press.

The worst nuisances were the vague and vociferous individuals who wanted to tell Sven how to save or not to save the ship. I caught one of these, a stocky, white-lashed type gibbering at him about the dangers of his position, the impossibility of saving the ship, the certainty of her breaking up within twenty-four hours, and so on.

Sven was letting it all wash over him, too tired even to defend himself, much less get rid of the man. I bore down upon them, all the tigress in me aroused. Rage swelled my five-foot-ten to six-foot-two, and deepened my already deep voice to a growl as menacing as the mate's. His white lashes flickered and with a cringe he shuffled to the railing.

"—and let me tell you," I added, "*Herzogin* will last on these rocks longer than your *Queen Mary* would. It's the wherewithal that's lacking, not the skill and knowledge to save her."

But for every three foisterers there was one genuine sympathizer. We soon recognized them as the people who hovered

humbly in boats until they could catch someone's eye to ask diffidently whether they could come on board "just for a few minutes". They all came with a purpose, to offer what they could in the way of private help.

"We'll give that dog of yours a home.—Come to us for hot baths.—Any time you want to sleep ashore there's a bed.—What about sending your personal things to us, we've an empty room to store them.—There's a good meal waiting for you at our house whenever you care to come——" Their genuine kindness warmed the rather chilly cockles of our hearts.

It was on this second day of being pinioned there that we all began to feel irked by being watched. The whole top of the cliff was black with people, an amorphous mass whose gaze fell like some insidious ray upon the ship and us midgets. Rank upon rank of the sandwich-munching curious, they left us no shred of privacy—we, who were used to the vast privacy of the oceans and the commentless glance of whale and gull. In all the seven weeks we were to lie there stricken, no daylight hour passed free of this subtle irritant. Many tens of thousands of people were to tramp on that cliff top, probably more than had ever set foot there in its whole geological history.

Not that every gazer was crudely curious. One, Hilton Brown, proved that. He wrote the following poem, which appeared in *Punch* on the 27th May, entitled "*Herzogin Cecilie speaks——*"

*Oh, could I not
Have sunk to some blue deep?
Could not seas
I sailed so many days
And knew and loved always—
Oh, could not these
Have drawn me down to some deep ocean grot,
Where I might keep
My privacy, alone, unseen, forgot?*

*Instead, I lie
By Fate's unlucky trick,
Not on the ocean floor
But high and dry
Two cables from the shore.
Where every Tom and Dick
(And Toms and Dicks are many)
At yonder farmer's gate
Pays down his penny
To gaze upon the fate
Of one who sailed so swift
And now can sail no more.*

*They come in cars
In charabanc and bus
And, pointing, they direct
Their cameras and their binoculars
On pride and glory wrecked
On beauty stripped and bare;
Assembled, they discuss
My ropes and spars
And mispronounce my name
Till I am shaken through and through with shame.*

*Would I had been—
Or even now could be—
Some petty craft and mean,
Smack, skiff or brigantine
No Tom or Dick would give a cent to see;
Not the famed Herzogin
The flying Cecilie,
That sad celebrity.*

*Is there no gale
Of all the gales I weathered,*

*No hurricane
From Baltic snowfields or the Bay untethered
That will return again
For old sake's sake
And fatally assail
This prisoned residue?
Of all the tides I knew
Will not one lift me from this bed and make
Me once again my own?
Ah, then would I
Sink, sink—and oh, so gladly,—like a stone
To the deep dark
Where never passer-by
Could see or stare or gesture or remark;
Thankful thenceforth
To be no more a tripper's pennyworth,
To lie,—my sorrow and myself—alone.*

This was one of the few occasions when Mr. Punch, unabashed, shed a tear in public.

On Sunday night, in spite of all the pessimistic views he had listened to that day, I knew that Sven was still undaunted, convinced deep within him that somehow or other he would refloat *Herzogin*. From somewhere or other the money would come. The main thing at present was to hang on and get as much weight out of her as possible.

The cargo underwriters wanted to salvage the undamaged wheat. Let them begin at once. He had already taken soundings that showed an ordinary coaster could lie alongside. Let them go on and take the wet wheat, too. It could probably be used for animals. The quicker the better. Whatever happened we would have to get all the gear possible ashore, sails, yards, topmasts, everything that weighed heavily and could be removed. Quickly, too, we must get a diver to try to find out what the actual damage was, and then we must find pumps—big, reliable pumps—and

make collision mats—but quickly, quickly everything must be done while the good weather lasted—and we must pray for the English summer to be fine and calm.

Both of us lay, fully clad, very still, trying to gain repose but burning with that fever of “quickly, quickly”. Sven’s mind churned with technicalities. Mine quested in dimmer realms.

A third dawn crept over the English Channel. Black Bolt Head turned an eerie grey in the early sunlight. Overnight, an old tame wise-looking dove had roosted in the chartroom. She did not even move when *Förste* was writing up the log. She was obviously a late riser. It was comforting to see the way she trusted us.

“Noah’s dove,” someone murmured.

When a porpoise also made his appearance and for many days showed a fin round our bows or cavorted in escort of the boats plying to and from the estuary, we grew aware that the sea gods were not unmindful of us. On such fragilities do sailors build a tower of hope.

That day we rigged our own breeches buoy, for the coast-guards’ stoicism was now sorely tried. They had camped on the brow of that cliff for more than forty-eight hours and had not yet had the satisfaction of rescuing us from a disintegrating ship. Worst of all, they had had to endure thousands of sightseers surging round them, asking innumerable questions, and continually having to be warned off their precious gear. When our contraption replaced theirs, and they departed leaving ours unguarded, we all prayed silently that no inquisitive fool would meddle with it.

The week dragged on—everything becoming more complicated except the most important fact that to save her was clearly now only a matter of money. The tide of journalists and photographers swelled daily, and I found myself struggling not only with them but with what amounted to *Herzogin’s* fan mail. Letters by the hundred arrived from a surprising variety of people, who apparently had adored her from afar for years. All that was expressed

in them amounted to a considerable mass of latent energy. If one but knew the formula for harnessing it to her rescue!

Of this I spoke to two young men who represented the *Sunday Pictorial*, because they were obviously kind hearts before they were journalists, and had betrayed their feeling for the poor Duchess by visiting her most unnecessarily often. It needed no trained journalist to realize that *Herzogin's* plight had woken in the English public an extraordinary interest, compounded of nostalgia for their own great seafaring past and sheer pity for the beautiful vessel which seemed to be the symbol of everything that was valiantly romantic in an unromantic world.

Thousands milled in and out of Salcombe; boatmen had never been so busy or so prosperous; farmers who owned the paths to Bolt Head put a tidy sum away in pennies and sixpences: and all for the sight of a four-masted barque, forlornly prone upon a reef, the blue cross of Finland obstinately drooping from her gaff. What the elegance of *Cutty Sark*, lying year after year so trimly and patiently in Falmouth Bay, waiting for some acknowledgment of her shining place in history, had not been able to do, the majesty of *Herzogin* had accomplished—bursting upon the world that April morning by one stroke of ill-fortune.

Only years afterwards, when going through the harvest of newspaper cuttings which my mother had paid for, did I realize that practically every newspaper in Britain the whole summer printed bulletins of *Herzogin's* state and fate every few days.

The two *Pictorial* men were busy all that week weaving the web that would entrap two flies, the public to read their Sunday newspaper, and a benefactor or benefactors who would provide the cash that would give *Herzogin* back her health and calling.

Their second objective was of enormous importance to us, so that when they asked me to write a series of articles "giving an intimate picture" of the Duchess, I swallowed my sensibilities and sat down in all the hurly-burly to write something that would satisfy the vast public of a popular Sunday newspaper and help to make the Duchess's personality known.

Both Sven and I had had some experience of the distastefulness of publicity, and when we had married had done everything possible to cut it out of our lives—but if publicity was a weapon which would help in the fight for *Herzogin's* continued existence we would use it—and blow what the more sensitive section of the world thought of us.

At that time, though world trade was in a depressed state, there were a great many very rich people in England. To one of these, said to be interested in sail-training for young Britons, the *Sunday Pictorial* now applied and we found ourselves involved with a legendary figure much cultivated by the British popular press—Lady Houston.

Her statements were sweeping—she was willing to “have her salvaged if the British Navy would take her over as a training ship”.

Was it perverse of us to feel relieved when the British Navy said no?

Lady Houston, sheltered by the ramparts of her millions, was of a generation out of touch with the young Britons of the thirties, scores of whom had sailed as apprentices in the Erikson ships. One of them, already mounting in his profession, who had served a round trip in *Herzogin*, wrote to his old captain:

‘That the Admiralty should have refused Lady Houston’s magnificent offer is a tragedy, but even if it had been accepted and she had sailed again as a training ship for the navy it would not be anything like the same. For instead of being the triumphant climax of man’s art of using the raw forces of nature for his own good—both the physical good of bringing bread for those who need it and the spiritual good of teaching men of all nations to work together as brothers—instead of that there would be the tragic spectacle of such a noble ship deliberately training men to kill men. What a perversion, what a prostitution that would be! No, it would only have been second-best. She wouldn’t have been the same Duchess, I think. If the purpose for which a life

is lived counts for anything, and not merely the fact of living, then one feels almost tempted to think that it may be better as it is—better that she should die unsullied than that she should survive for such a purpose. But to be kept in suspense, watching her slowly dying while there is still a possibility of saving her, must indeed be an agony for all who love her. Time will tell what the outcome of it will be. I wonder how much time.'

If one knew and loved the Duchess it was hard not to talk about her as a living being, hard not to think of her as a creature whose life blood was draining away on that rocky shelf, hard not to believe that she gave us a weary look of hope every time we returned from shore.

Time—Sven lost none of it investigating every possibility of salvage on a shoestring, but however skillfully he adjusted that string it wouldn't measure much less than £2,000. Meanwhile the cargo was being discharged into coasters, but not in even daily dribbles, for these mariners of the coast showed a timorous spirit, and scuttled for harbour at the first ruffle.

After the rejection of Lady Houston's offer early in May, the mail increased prodigiously, and now included cheques and postal orders 'towards the salvage, from enthusiasts whose horizon was not ringed by men-of-war', and we hastily placed them in a special account for the Duchess's salvage in the local bank.

Meanwhile it proved almost impossible to get any definite instructions out of the owner. He had, of course, suffered a crushing financial blow, and rumour had it that his wife had taken to her bed out of grief for her favourite ship; but those who had remained with *Herzogin* felt that he should come personally to see what could be done. However, he rather vaguely delegated some authority to the London agents, who delegated that to a local firm, who, in turn, felt they could make no decisions on their own. Sven was in a position in which no master of a vessel should be placed. No one could have blamed him for salving what gear he could and then quitting: but Sven couldn't quit *Herzogin*, no

more than he could have quitted me if I too had been lying there desperately ill. So we hung on.

Domestically *Herzogin* was now in somewhat better order. We all still lived aboard and seventeen-year-old Ehlers was appointed cook under my supervision. Meals were still very erratic, depending on the tide. The large range did not enjoy its frequent baths, and protested by gathering soot at a preposterous rate. It was a blackening task to keep the flues clear, and solemn and important people always seemed to choose the very moment when I was blackest to want to have a word with me. The dear old admiral whom Sven brought to the galley almost lost his nerve when I was introduced as the master's wife. Teeth and eyeballs were the only gleams in my sooty smudginess.

Ehlers was not at first much of a cook. I returned from shore one day to find him and the other Danes peering into a pallid mess stickily bubbling in a pot.

"What's this?" I asked, puzzled.

"Gravy!" they stated with great conviction.

Their recipe was to melt some fat, mix flour and water, add it to the fat, and then hypnotize it without the aid of a spoon.

Everything they cooked they ate with relish, though under normal conditions they would have emptied the messes over the cook's head. They were marvellous boys, for they remained cheerful, willing and devoted—yet among them were those who had made a great stir in Australia by lodging a formal complaint with their consul that they had been mishandled by the mates and captain!

The sea reigned over half the ship. The other half we tried to keep clean and tidy. The proverbial Scandinavian intolerance of muck functioned relentlessly, a powerful boost to morale. The yards, too, were kept trimmed meticulously. The two mates bustled as of yore, and their whistles piped as sharply. There was even the faint ghost of contentment when a calm summer dawn woke us, the decks were wet with dew, no boats had yet appeared from shore, and the malignant cliff-top was empty.

The ghost of contentment—for there hovered round us now some ghost-like hopes of refloating her. Salvage firms were reducing their tenders, which had ranged up to £15,000, and now sank in one instance to £1500.

Sven, certain that she could be refloated by nothing more expensive than pumps and towage, took a hint from a naval visitor and approached the Naval Dockyard at Plymouth. It was an excursion neither of us ever forgot, partly because the naval men were so kind and helpful, partly because neither of us had ever seen so much rust afloat, nor gear stored in such a state of dilapidation. Rank upon rank, submarines and destroyers lay decaying, rusty sacrifices upon the altar of Baldwin's politics. Pumps, which the Navy was willing to hire to us for a moderate sum, looked as if they would, like a newly excavated corpse, disintegrate with the first breath of fresh air. It was a shock to Sven, who admired England and had expected the naval dockyard to impress him.

"Heaven help her if another war comes!" he sighed, as we left the place. I secretly thought that six months of Gusta's sway in that dockyard would pull it into shape for less expense than it now probably took to keep it going as a junk hole.

Beneath his preoccupation with salvage. Sven worried constantly about the cause of the stranding. Neither he nor any official at the inquiry could find a flaw in the navigation or handling of the ship. Every factor that should be taken into consideration in plotting a course up Channel, tidal set, drift, current and so on, seemed to have been accounted for. Yet the fact remained that she had come eight miles and more off her course in a few hours of sailing. Abnormal tidal set combined with fog could not alone have accounted for this. The compasses and chronometers had been checked in Falmouth the day before.

The English authorities would have none of the idea that magnetic attraction might account for the large number of wrecks which has occurred on that short strip of coast. No one has ever

got to the root of the matter, but I record here a few strange facts and one queer rumour.

Shortly after we stranded Sven received a visit from a sea-captain who had been a passenger in a steamer which during that foggy night of April 24th-25th, had been heading down Channel on a course roughly parallel to ours. He had been on his way to join his own ship, and had now made a special and tortuous journey half across England, in order to tell Sven that the steamer, also unwittingly far off her course, had only been saved from piling up on the Manacles by the simultaneous lifting of the fog and the coming of the dawn.

A few weeks after we stranded fog again lay around us on a calm sea during the daytime. A small fishing boat hung motionless some distance from us to seaward. It was they who shouted a warning to a steamer which came nosing through the fog, so that she was able to take her helm hard over and escape before she crashed into the Ham Stone, and probably into us.

The rumour that "they" were experimenting with remote control of the compass and by some fluke had affected *Herzogin's* was persistent. Sven even heard it from a senior and presumably responsible naval officer. In 1957 the idea does not seem quite so fantastic as it did in 1936. The helmsman stuck to his story of the violently oscillating compass—and that story took some explaining.

Physical cause there must have been for the disaster; abnormal tide set, magnetism, what you will. The fabric of life is woven of such sturdy tangible threads. Of those invisible filaments which ordained the pattern no one can be positive—for pattern there is, as all who are self-aware must recognize.

I see the Duchess as the triumphant climax (so the ex-apprentice put it) of what had been a master passion in the human race. That she was in the hands of those immemorial seafarers, the Ålännings, and commanded by a man of such salty lineage as Sven, was well and fitting. That she found that her time had come, both in the large way of history, and in the secret way of

what some people would call the mystical union of herself and her master was also fitting. It is true that Sven's love for her was the essence of all that passion with which men have loved ships for many ages, but it was a passion which bled his vitality into her avid veins. In return she could give nothing of the dear comfort of human love, which is the right of every human soul.

Much as I loved her, too, I had not been able to help encroaching on the Duchess's preserves: for I was neither humble nor self-effacing by nature, and the role of second-best wife was hard to play.

The feeling that *Herzogin* immolated herself on the Ham Stone never left me. It made me work all the harder to get her off, but it comforted me when we finally had to abandon her.

"Best," I thought then, "to let her have what is obviously her way."

Just when the Lieutenant got in touch with Sven I cannot remember, but it must have been some time after the middle of May, when Lady Houston's fanfares finally faded.

The Lieutenant was quite another sort of Briton; secretive and quiet as a mole, insisting on anonymity (which I think it best to preserve). I believe he had served a trip in one of Gusta's ships but otherwise he was an ordinary young naval lieutenant, with all the characteristics of his breed, including (Sven and I deduced this from various symptoms), personal pennilessness. But he had about £2000 at his beck and call. This he proposed to use in salvaging *Herzogin*.

His story that the money was a legacy, and that in order to gain salvage experience he would blow it on the Duchess, Sven had to accept—but with many reservations. When we got to know him better we tried to find out if he had any special feeling for her, but either he had none or his English reticence got the better of us. As time passed we believed his story less and less.

But we did not question it. Sven had prayerfully hoped the

money would come from somewhere, and when it miraculously appeared, he became so engrossed in the work it made possible that he had no time to ponder on miracles.

At the same time, spurred on by the donations in the bank, we were planning to launch an appeal for more funds, to be devoted to the repair that would probably cost more than the salvage itself.

The owner was flabbergasted and inclined to smell a rat. Who could blame him—altruism did not enter into normal ship's business, and his immediate reflex was to feel that someone must be getting a rake-off somehow. It took several letters and a telephone call to reassure him. Then, unexpectedly, his knubbly Åland pride was bruised, and he felt that as *Herzogin's* owner, he could not accept charity, intimating that it looked as if they thought he had no money of his own.

Sven smiled wryly when he read this, because with freights as they had been lately it must have been mostly pride that was in the owner's pocket.

After this outburst Gusta must have calmed down and be-thought him how gratifying it would be for everyone concerned if *Herzogin* should sail again. He wrote a letter to Sven which crossed one from Sven to him. Both contained the same scheme—*Herzogin* would carry British apprentices as part of her crew until such time as the money, reckoned at £50 pounds per head should be repaid.

On this basis the appeal was made public. Immediately money began to flow in. There were more mites than millions, but the total rose steadily.

Money was one thing and very necessary, but the most urgent problem still was how to get rid of the festering wheat. The bags had not yet rotted and the swollen grain congested them into an almost immovable mass. If they were slashed, high tide made the swill which resulted unmanageable. The underwriters still refused to cut their losses, and the salty mushy ferment was still being discharged laboriously into the nervous coasters. The

Lieutenant joined us in praying for the moment when the stevedores would give up and we could heave it all into the sea.

A faint foetid odour began to exude from the hatches, gradually overpowering the strong, brisk scent of the salt sea. We who lived in the ship grew used to it, never realizing that it was the forerunner of an unthought of menace, a menace which would soon weed out all but the boldest devotees among the ship's henchmen.

The sort of life Sven and I now lived required versatility, austerity and steadfastness, of the spirit as much as of the body. Without each other we would each have crumpled, and aware of this, we were meticulous in disciplining each other over the smallest details—sometimes with ludicrous results.

Sven had always sought to imbue me with the attributes of a good sailor. It is surprising how many of these are based on selfless consideration for others, so that under his tuition I felt I was progressing towards being quite a decent human being: but I was immature enough to accept many of his precepts with rigid faith. One of these was—never show a light on deck.

Thereby hangs a tale which has since become a family legend. "Mummy," the children say, "raised the oar and——" Here their eyes sparkle, though their tone is awed.

Faithless hussies loom large in a sailor's life, and the motor-boat which we were forced to hire while lying out at Bolt Head was of the same faithless breed: but it was no good calling her a bitch as she lay and cringed among the rocks, her motor dead as a doornail, making our normally perilous journey more perilous by her pranks.

Salcombe estuary, with its bar and the rocky cluster at its western portal through which the fishermen had shown us the channel, was easy to negotiate by day—less threatening than the south-westerly swell which one could meet as one phutted down Channel alongside those reef-fringed cliffs to our rocky berth—but on a dark night with the tide running strong it was nasty.

The first night we made that journey there were neither moon

nor stars. The tide was running out, sucking at the invisible boulders which we must hug if we were to avoid the chop on the bar. When the motor coughed into silence Sven gave me the tiller, and feeling the tide hustling us, I peered ahead, trying to distinguish the blackness of rock from the blackness of water. Unreasoning dread of a miniature repetition of that groan on the Ham Stone took hold of me.

The motor remained obdurate. I could hear Sven breathing hard through his nose, a sign with him of great concentration. He flicked his torch over the engine and fiddled endlessly. Then he broke one of the canons of his own law; he left the torch glaring full in my eyes. How many times I had been told never to show a light on deck! I was outraged—and blinded.

"Please," I said, "the torch! Don't shine it aft. I can't see."

He breathed harder through his nose and ignored me.

"Please!" I repeated, panic and righteous indignation rising fast, but Sven's masculine disregard for a woman's bidding was in the ascendant. Besides, the torch was in the right position to illuminate some vital cranny. However, he did not deign to tell me this.

The tide was bustling us faster than ever and I felt the jar as the hussy grazed a rock.

"Sven!" I spoke through clenched teeth, "If you don't turn off that torch, or turn it away, I shall whack you with an oar!"

This threat was also ignored. It flashed through my mind that our whole relationship was based on meaning what we said, and never saying what we did not mean. With a last despairing "Sven!" I picked up the oar and brought it down on what I judged would be some tough part of him. A flopping sound and then complete silence showed that I had guessed wrong. It must have been his head! Both Sven and the torch were extinguished.

Horribly conscious of his unconsciousness I hung on to the tiller till my sight began to clear, only to guess that we were fast approaching the portal passage, now inevitable, I further realized as the seeth of the tide outside fell on my ear. I was no oarsman,

but it would be best to take to the oars and do something quickly rather than take time over reviving the captain. Yes—captain—all at once I was a miserable mutinous apprentice, aware of his own infinite infamy.

I was groping for the other oar when the motor suddenly spun into life and Sven's voice said,

"Shift! I'll take the tiller."

I shifted, and sat crouched in remorse—until I had to fumble for a handkerchief.

"If you have one that's not covered in oil I should like it to wipe my head," he said.

To this day I wonder why he didn't give me a good hiding.

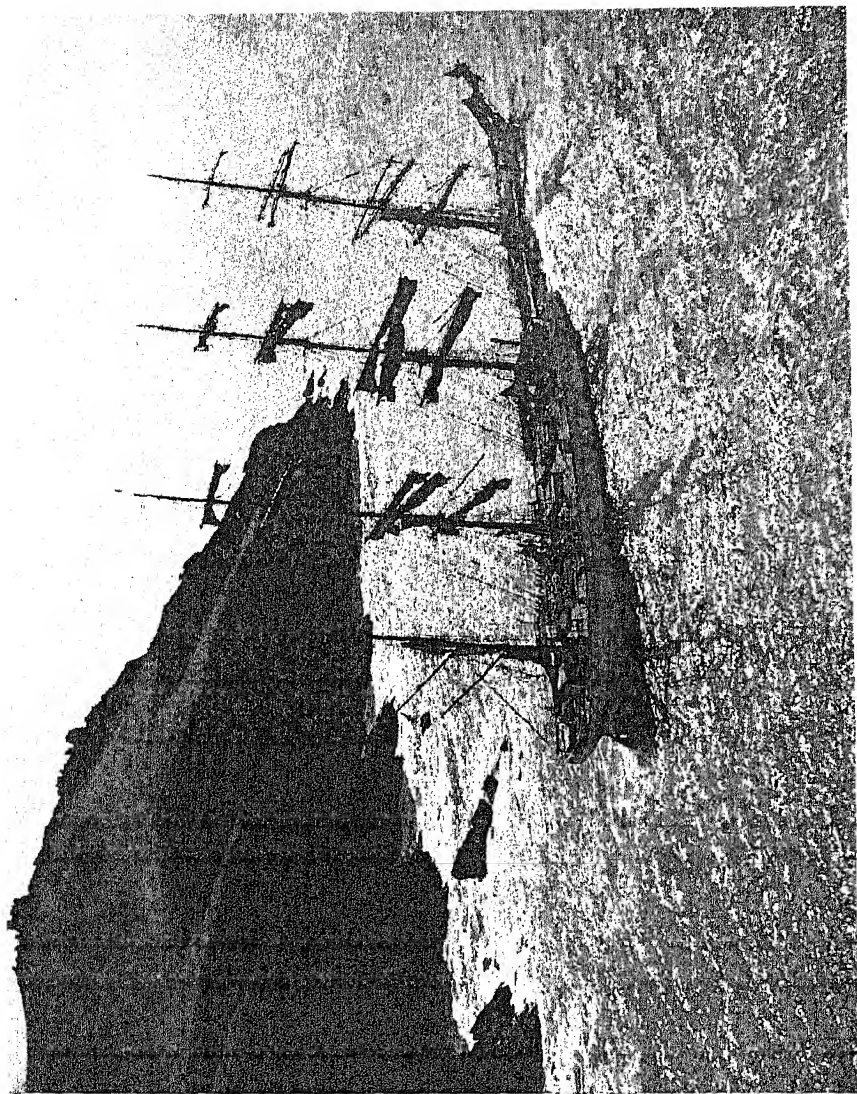
To board *Herzogin* now, at dead of a moonless night, was an experience of desolation. No light showed, no watchman loomed at the rail, no Paik slavered a welcome. The ship was dark, shapeless—and the insidious sea lapped and whispered in and around her. She seemed no more than one of the rock masses of that evil spot.

We would clamber up onto the poop and shake our dripping oilskins, two stray, weary penguins seeking the respite of a boulder awash: for respite she still was from the turmoil, the anxieties and the stress of people ashore.

Below all was still familiar. If either of the mates had a lamp burning we would concoct a brew of some sort and relish the home-made cake which various well-wishers sent us. This edible sympathy was a wonderful heartener, for we were all lusty and young and our spirits rose easily on a comforted belly.

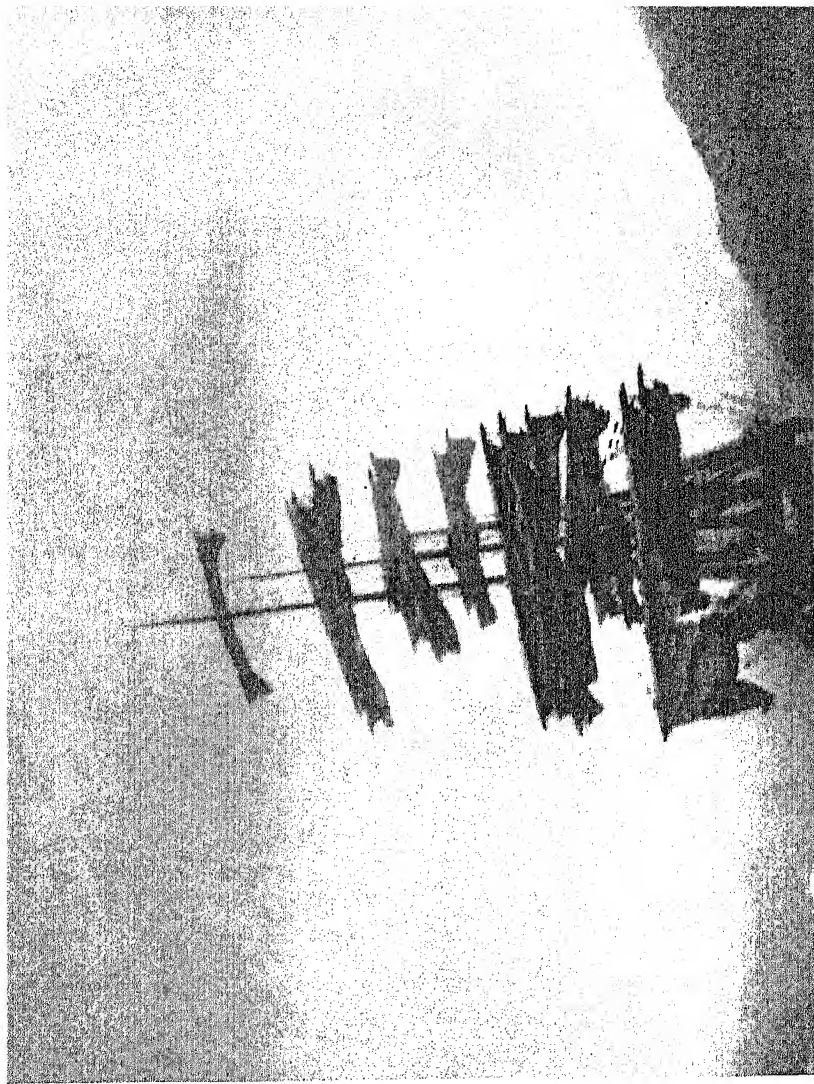
One day a cardboard box addressed to "Captain and Mrs. Eriksson" was discovered in the chartroom. Inside was not cake but a prettily arranged meal of dressed crab and salad with mayonnaise in a small pot. No tinned taste here! It tasted as exquisite as it looked. No one had seen who had left it there.

After a few days the gift was repeated, its arrival again wrapped in mystery. One of the boys thought a fisherman whose boat was often in our neighbourhood and who sometimes came aboard might have brought it.



20. The beginning
of the end, Sewer
Mill Cove, April,
1936.

21. First light
Saturday, April
25th. What the
lifeboat found.



Next time it was lobster, luscious as a dream. Larsen managed to waylay the fisherman, but he would only say that a friend had been asked by someone to put it aboard. After that he brought no more boxes. Instead they were left with the porter at the Salcombe Hotel, which we had made our depot. He could only say that it was a lady unknown to him who left it. How many of her crabs and lobsters we guzzled before he managed to note the number of her car! They proved to be the foundation of a lasting friendship, which culminated when she and her lobster-potting spouse elected to spend their honeymoon at Pellas.

At that time, so harried were we, it seemed that for every diffident, helpful human being there were ten publicity wolves, typified by the woman who came up to me in the street and gushed, "Oh, Mrs. Eriksson, we've got one of your spoons! Such a lovely souvenir of our summer holiday!"

I tried to wither her with a glare, bitterly aware that her sort had nearly stripped the ship of the little cutlery we had kept on board. Bitter, too, that we could not spare a man regularly to warn off such visitors.

But all was not awry with the race of men, as we discovered one night when walking down Salcombe's deserted street. From a chequer of moonlight and shadow a small familiar voice called us.

"Mee—ouw—eee!"

There was Pelle, pattering after us, anxious for a cuddle—Pelle become the sleekest waterfront pussy!

"Nine lives?" he purred. "Nonsense! I live with that customs man, of course!"

Paik, interned at the Blue Cross kennels in London, had won the affection of his warder, who sent Sven bulletins of his welfare. Our last sight of him had been a dignified, mournful prisoner immured in a travelling crate, which the Blue Cross had brought out to the ship for him.

It must have been the worst moment in Paik's life, listening to his master's kind firm explanation that he must get into the thing, go away with the nice men, and be content until they met again:

no snarls, no growls, only obedience and good manners, just to show them what a fine dog he was. At the words "fine dog" Paik gazed wistfully into Sven's face and gently thumped his tail. Then he entered the crate as if it had been his lifetime kennel. Of such trust was their eight years' companionship made.

The canary, which Diana had taken ashore in the lifeboat, had succumbed to the lure of publicity, and was now in the habit of writing chirpy notes to the local papers, thanking its public for "all the salvage sixpences which my songs have inspired". It was surprising how much silver collected in the box beneath its cage.

In an effort to stem the flood of trippers we charged an admission fee to come on board, which was only collected if someone was free to do so. If no one was the collecting box was liable to offer sums like 3s. 7½d. at the end of the day. It would have been easier to forbid any strangers on board, but the poor Duchess could not now afford to be so exclusive. She must stay popular with all if the money for the repair scheme was to be collected.

Discharging for the buyer of the cargo continued sullenly and slothfully. The English hands employed daily for this were slow of speech, slow of step, and slow of understanding. Sometimes 162 broken bags and 22 baskets would be the whole day's tally. In the middle of May three days of heavy swell stopped all work and then it continued intermittently till the 28th, when, without informing the captain that he had abandoned for the while what remained, the buyer, a local man who was handling his own stevedoring, removed himself, his men and his gear.

This moment Sven and the Lieutenant had been impatiently for, their plans well laid. All the next day the mates and crew were busy rigging gear for taking aboard the pumps, and one of the fo'c'sles was cleared out for the team which was to work them. That night watch was kept for the arrival of the *Annie Flossie* from Plymouth. Profound excitement gripped us all. When the *Annie Flossie* came lolling along early next day I seem to remember that we gathered together and gave her a ragged hurrah of welcome.

The pumps she had brought were those we had seen *en déshabillé* in the dockyard, relics of the 1914-18 war. They were even less impressive in the sparkling May sunlight. A team came with them, on special leave, we gathered, from the naval dockyard. They were a cheerful, complacent lot, obviously men who could look back on a vista of easy, beer-bolstered days. Like the pumps, they were no longer so young either.

A very different band were the Cambridge undergraduates whose own idea it was to help by shovelling wheat. They camped in the sail room—nice, overgrown, infantile creatures whose upper-class muscles could not really achieve what their enthusiasm envisaged. Their numbers swelled and diminished erratically, for new recruits replaced those who had to leave on other affairs or because they found it too tough. Jim Stephens, their leader, ruled over them with acumen and wisdom. *Förste* ordered their labours. It was his charm rather than his discipline that got a surprising amount of work out of them. They cost the ship only their food, but they were worth a great deal more than that, if only for their moral significance. Donations are one thing, but a spade and sweat are another.

Also there was Dick Southon, dark, dreamy and devoted, returned to the ship because when she was in trouble he had suddenly realized how much she had meant to him. He was a former apprentice and gave up a good berth in a steamer to work for a shilling a day and live like a pig. I hope he now has his reward, snug on the bridge of some super vessel.

By the first of June the pumps were installed and being tested. They coughed, groaned and faltered, resenting this interruption in their peaceful existence. Finally, coerced with bangs and buffets by their minions, they ran for a while with a shattering racket and stink, proving that water could pour in a steady stream from their six- and twelve-inch pipes. It was the most heartening sight any of us had seen for a long time.

The pumps worked, but Sven and the lieutenant had other problems, of which the following were some of the factors.

1. To rely solely on pumps, which to keep down the cost we must do, would make a lengthy tow risky.

2. No dry dock would accept a ship loaded with rotting wheat.

3. The full extent of damage could not be ascertained until she was empty.

4. If she was empty temporary repair on the hull would be possible.

5. What she needed was a nearby sheltered spot where she could be beached on sand.

Salcombe was near, and there was shelter and sandy beach inside the bar. But when the Salcombe authorities were approached they registered aloof indignation. Ignoring the fact that the ship's misfortunes had brought them unnumbered thousands of extra summer visitors, that fish and crabs make short work of rotten wheat, and that all who lived on board rejoiced in robust health, they spoke of poisonous contamination and epidemics. We would not be allowed inside the bar.

So the best that could be done for *Herzogin* was a beaching ground at Starchole Bay. The bottom was sand. Low cliff gave protection from every quarter except the south-east and from the south-east no storm would come at this time of year, the locals averred. We had no choice. Starchole it had to be—if we got that far.

From the second to the fifth the crew were busy making collision mats, laying hawsers to the Ham Stone and setting out the reserve anchor. The log for these days comments dryly "No coffee break", which meant that the dearly loved afternoon respite was voluntarily skipped because of press of work.

On the fifth the pumps all went full blast till they could suck no more—but she remained fast. It was obvious more wheat must come out of her.

The seventh was a Sunday. On the eighth the pumps were fed water and wheat continually from dawn to dusk, men keeping

the porridge astir at the suction intakes and splitting bags to keep it to the right consistency.

On the ninth all the water the pumps could take was pumped out, and the ship began to work, feeling a partial buoyancy. Then the pumps failed and had to be mended.

Men from shore, as well as the crew and the undergraduates, continued heaving wheat into the sea. On the tenth, with the pumps going full blast, two tugs tried to pull her off at high water—but without success.

Ashore dismay and despondency gripped the interested thousands. But all was set for another try, and she was already buoyant when the twelve-inch pump gave out and had to be repaired. We lost that tide.

Everyone continued to heave wheat desperately. A dogged frenzy gripped the men slithering and stumbling, sometimes up to their armpits in water, in the holds.

"Feed the pumps! Feed the pumps!"

The Cambridge men grew hollow-eyed, not used to such sustained exertion.

"Shove the pipe down deeper, deeper, deeper!" yelled the pump foreman, and deeper they forced it, frantically stirring with spades to keep the gluey mess liquid.

No one could stand the pace for long, and they worked in gangs, taking turns at the easier task of splitting bags and avalanching the wheat—"But not so much, damn you, you'll block the pumps!" Acrid stench from the pumps, noxious sweetishness from the holds, the air was heavy with foulness, vibrating with the harsh drumming clamour of the motors, whipped with screeched orders. Pandemonium reigned—but things were getting done.

I longed to be down there, shovelling wheat. Every muscle in my body longed to do it, to help in such a concrete way, thus simply to serve the Duchess. But the knowledge that it might just possibly frustrate our prospect of parenthood arrested me. Besides, it would be giving way to Nils, and I had plenty of useful things to do instead of succumbing to that.

Pumping wheat feverishly brought us to the nineteenth.

When she rose gently from her bed, no one could believe that she was giving to the pull of the two tugs, whose churning propeller water had been encircling us for a quarter of an hour. There was a slight tremor. She heeled a little and then assumed a more vertical position. Could she be moving?

The people on the cliff were cheering.

A jar shook us, but the snorting tugs strained steadily, and though she grounded once more, she was suddenly gently free and gliding forward. The hawsers ran out and the reserve anchor had to be abandoned. From the deck, from the cliff, from the swarm of motor-boats and yachts which followed her, an exultant cheer echoed thinly in the summer air. Though woefully down by the head, the Duchess, afloat and in progress, was still a majestic sight.

The two tugs hooted deliriously with all the abandon of their vulgar honest souls. The pumps roared and clattered and stank. My heart, thumping in its cage, pounded rhythm into the sensation of joy and achievement.

Seven weeks we had lain there—and now we were off. Within an hour we would be safely beached in Starehole—or at the bottom of the Channel.

After all those weeks of stress, doubt, setback, determination, obstinacy and relentless labour, this, the result, seemed facile. She had risen from her bed, and with only the slightest hesitation, had floated silently away. At first, only the altered bearing on the Ham Stone showed us that she had moved at all.

As very slowly the tugs drew her along the coast Sven and the mates prowled slowly about the ship, conning every aspect of her state, again and again eyeing the towing gear, the level of the water, and the tiny crack of strain at the foot of her mainmast. At no other time, even in the worst weather, had I seen that peculiar stamp on their faces. Their eyes looked as if they had never blinked, their mouths looked as if they had never opened; their bodies looked as if they had never relaxed.

The pump team brooded over their belching gods, smirking with triumph, but they too were tense. With good reason—none of them could swim.

Everything, however, went without mishap. Before evening fell we settled on the sandy bottom that had been promised us, higher out of the water than at Bolt Head, but still, to Sven's chagrin, not high enough. Nothing he could say would induce the naval gang to keep the pumps going until we could get hawsers ashore and winch her stern farther in. They wanted to knock off, and they wanted above all to celebrate. The Lieutenant, not as convinced as Sven of the necessity, would not or could not exert his authority. If he had, the story might have had a different ending.

Just for that one evening, however, we pretended, Sven and I and the mates, that all was well. We needed, all of us, a little sense of bliss, even if it was only an illusion. The boys, some of them, sought their bliss ashore, but when all strangers had left the ship, for the undergraduates had also departed to celebrate, the four of us sat down and had a drink together in the saloon, now almost devoid of furniture, but still stately and welcoming. Gruff clipped words of mutual thanks and congratulations passed between the three men. We sipped ceremoniously, drinking the Duchess's health—the incredibly tough, strong, and resilient Duchess, who could lie on a reef in the Channel swell for seven weeks, full of rotting wheat, battered from without and bursting from within, and still be her old dear gallant self. Not that any of us voiced such sentiments, but each knew what the others were likely to be thinking as the glasses were raised.

We all knew, too, that none of us really liked the look of Starehole. In the shadows of evening when we had left the deck, its two flanks, stretching to port and starboard, had looked like the open, narrow-fanged jaws of a wolf, ready to snap.

"I'd got quite fond of Bolt Head," said *Förste* whimsically, as the White Horse revived him.

"You'll have plenty of time to say good-bye again, when you're out there fishing for the anchor——"

Sven let us talk, then he said quietly, as they rose to go, "Tomorrow, *styrman*, it will be the usual Saturday tidying and cleaning. We must try to get rid of some of the mess before they start again with the cargo on Monday. There seems to be a little stream coming down those rocks right aft. We might try to rig up a canvas hose——"

They stood talking at the doorway, the mate and he, while the short, stocky second cocked his eyes at them as he absorbed the ideas—a bridge—two ropes, no need to keep the motor-boat—rig the gangway.

"*Ja, Kapten, ja Kapten. Godnatt, Godnatt.*"

How bone-weary they all looked—with a weariness never induced by the worst weather at sea. Sven shut the door and turned to me.

"So many congratulations—all those people, Pamie," he said, sitting down and lighting a cigarette. "And what a lot of stuff those journalists will write all wrong in the newspapers! Doesn't anyone realize that this is only the first step?"

"A few must," I said, "but if the many rejoice, what of it? It doesn't do *Herzogin* any harm that people are glad for her sake. And if they're glad to the tune of that £500 which the Canadian chap sent yesterday it's a help to the ship for them to be glad."

Gladness met us like a strong heady scent when we went ashore in Salcombe next day. It beamed at Sven from every face, the familiar and the strange.

"Ah, Captain, we never really believed you'd do it!—the faith that moved mountains."

A little of the gladness broke through and warmed his spirit, which was in a cold frenzy of activity, planning the moves ahead.

I knew that he would have given all the flattering words of strangers for one hour with the man whose wisdom and resource as a shipmaster he most respected, Gerhard Sjögren, one of Gusta's senior captains. But he had already paid us a visit some

weeks before, and had now sailed for the Baltic. Nisse had sailed from London, Linus was too far off to visit us, as were all the others, locked to their ships by the cruel disparity of sterling and Finnish mark. I knew that what Sven needed most was a merry evening of heart-to-heart talking and drinking with his brother masters. This was impossible, and in spite of all the friends and well-wishers around us, there was no substitute.

We did, however, celebrate by standing ourselves a slap-up dinner at the Salcombe Hotel. We had had many a meal there before but never such an interrupted one as this. At last I said to Sven:

"Can't we take it in turns? You chew in peace while I say 'Oh, thank you. It's wonderful, isn't it? But my husband always believed it was possible.' Then when the next one comes along you do the honours while I get on with my dinner. You know, these days I'm hungrier than ever. What will my appetite be like in a few months?"

But Sven, innately courteous, which I was only by training, had the right word and the right smile for everyone who came to our table, while the good nourishing food congealed on his plate.

We did not know then that we were to have only nineteen days of grace—as a sop to the little achievement. With the saloon once more furnished and carpeted, the ebony and ivory ornaments from Africa looming on the counter shelf and flowers in the vases, we felt garnished and happy to receive visitors. It was lovely summer weather, and the dipping meadow that ran down to the rim of Starehole was stippled with mushrooms. It was Sven's idea to pick them for a feast.

I was amazed at his intense pleasure in gathering them, being then ignorant of the *Älännings'* traditional delight in harvesting the wild eatables of field and forest. He and the mate were like two children, exclaiming over the size and lusciousness of the *svamp*, as they called them.

I cooked them over a spirit stove. It was very cosy gobbling

mushroom stew in the lamplit saloon, seeing *Förste's* eye a-twinkle again, and Sven's face soften.

Clean fresh water through the canvas hose from the meadow brook now bestowed all its blessings; the luxuries of cleanliness and sweet water to drink which the all-too-civilized take for granted. The three-rope bridge from stern to shore provided easy access to the town, which was scarcely a mile's walk along the cliff. It daunted landsmen, who felt if they ventured on it and reached the ship that they had achieved some sort of accolade, but we, used to seething waters and swaying ropes, scuttered to and fro as deftly as spiders, glad to be quit of the tiresome and expensive motor-boat.

These trivialities were comforting to us humans, but to the uneasy being of the ship, beset still by mortal peril, they counted not a whit. Monday had dawned without any sign of a vessel in which to discharge wheat, which was still nominally the property of the last buyer who, though he had abandoned it at Bolt Head, had not yet done so legally. I think it must have been about this time that the Lieutenant, exasperated by the delay, bought the rights to the remaining cargo—for the main problem was still the old one of getting the wretched stuff out of her.

Every day it was becoming more evident that the low-hanging gas was our most dangerous enemy. Sven, investigating in the holds, bent too low in too enclosed an area and fell unconscious. He was quickly fished out by the mate, who luckily had been watching him from above. Gas masks made it possible to move about down there, but the exhaustion of working in them slowed up the pace so badly that little got done. We rigged wings on the ventilators, and if the wind blew the gas disappeared—but the wind seldom blew. It was summer holiday weather. Salcombe basked in it, and in the extra streams of visitors lured by the sight of "The Wreck".

"To The Wreck" the signboards said. Later folk talked of the "*Herzogin* summer", we were told, in the fat tones farmers use in calling to mind a bumper harvest. But some evil spirit had laid its

blindness on the perceptions of Authority in Salcombe, for they still refused to let us pump the wheat into the sea, even though we were at the mouth of the estuary.

It was Thursday before the Lieutenant's frantic efforts produced a vessel in which to unload wheat. The m.s. *Delta* came nervously alongside. What with the gas, the inability of the remaining pumps to keep the water down, except at ebb, and the swell, it was ten days before she had 210 tons of wheat inside her and could depart.

Summery the weather might be, and fairly windless, but the swell was as wakeful as a hungry beast, ever ready to pounce. For three days *Delta* lay in shelter behind the bar, while from the south-east quarter a heavy swell prowled and flexed its muscles in the turbulence of Starehole Bay: for all the locals' soothing assurances were figments of innacurate observation. Starehole, beneath its innocent looking surface, was a cauldron of currents and backwash, sucking and seething, writhing and undermining. Shelter it was, in the sense that wind from most quarters was stemmed by the lie of the land, but its water action, Sven realized all too late, was insidiously sucking the ship down into the sand. He said nothing of his suspicions, but urged on the discharging, in the hopes of winning the race with time.

Of our own men, there were now only the two mates and Southon left. The others, thinking the ship in safety, at last had asked to be signed off. Most of them were due to attend nautical college in the autumn, and they wanted a holiday first—that summer holiday that every Scandinavian sailor takes if he can.

When the three Danes shouldered their seabags and marched off, men every inch of them, we smiled to think that they were the same boys who had stood, so timid and nondescript, trying to catch the master's fancy in Schierbeck's office only nine months ago. Gestation in the womb of *Herzogin* was in some ways as great a miracle as the development of any foetus.

Herzogin's last chick was Dick Southon. What seaman's work, what tidying and cleaning, had now to be done was done by him

and the two mates—two mates and a skipper to one able seamen. It was a queer crew.

Letters from innumerable people now kept me busy at the typewriter, for many of them required answers. Some, which did not, were so poignant that only a very hard-hearted secretary would have ignored them. Best of all were the letters, all written in the pointed, running style of a past generation, from old sailing-ship men—some of them clipper men, knotty with rheumatics—but all full of interest, enthusiasm and encouragement for *Herzogin* and her champions.

Soon after we stranded, a news film had been made on board, part of which figured Sven and myself in conversation explaining the scheme to repay money collected for her salvage and repair by taking British apprentices. How many young hearts must have leapt in how many dark cinemas as they listened to our rasping words against the background of rigging, seas, and gulls. Knowing how wonderful life can be when dreams become a reality, I took care to answer every one of the hopeful scrawls from small and bigger boys, explaining the situation and telling them to write again when they heard that the ship was repaired.

The scrawls were not only from boys. A surprising number of girls implored to be considered—"strong and willing to do anything" was their motto.

I understood what they longed for, having longed for it myself; but I realized, that unlike me, not one woman in half a million would like it when she got it. All the same, their longing for the life of which *Herzogin* was a symbol was a sign of the widening horizon of womenfolk. A man-made world has imposed crippling and cruel limitations on the human female, hypocritically reserving some of the most wonderful and exciting aspects of life for the male—but to the girls I wrote briefly that women were not to be considered as apprentices, and Sven signed his name, so they had a nice autograph. What was the use of philosophizing to discontented young women about the equality of lion and lioness?

After *Delta's* departure another motor ship was expected. It

was as well that she did not arrive till the ninth of June. We had to lay out two extra hawsers to shore, and as the hours drew on, Starehole began to bare its teeth in earnest. The mate's laconic style of recording events in the log broke down before the hard truth:

Oerhört grovt dyning. Fartyget illa skadat av densamma. (Incredibly heavy swell. The ship badly damaged by it.)

We lay that night, nursing hope. Local opinion averred that the south-east swell was very exceptional and would not last—but local opinion had been so wrong about so much—about the sheltered waters of Starehole and also about the impossibility of getting *Herzogin* away from Bolt Head.

"But what I do know," said Sven, "is that if more of this swell comes up and gets heavier she won't stand up to it much longer. Not even *Herzogin* is as strong as that. Poor *Herzogin*, what she has to endure!"

By midnight and slack water she had stopped wincing, and I slept, wishing that Sven would sleep, too. But he kept going up on deck.

On the evening of the 11th the m.s. *Prince* appeared—and loaded three tons! There were still nearly two thousand tons of wheat in *Herzogin*. I can't remember how much was eventually got into that little ship. She had a valiant captain who was willing to load Sundays and all and brought her alongside whenever there was a seaman's chance. But when the swell permitted this, the gas stealthily made the holds a death trap, or the water conquered the pumps. So it went on desperately, till the 18th, a Saturday.

With little warning a south-east storm fell upon us, crowding the water into Starehole Bay. Swells they no longer could be called, but seas, which occasionally broke over us. Sven ordered everyone, except the mates, Southon and me, ashore. We five, having a loathing for leaving the ship, stayed on. As evening fell, the whine in the rigging grew higher, and more and more frequently waves crashed on to the high poop. Her bows were constantly in a smother.

The Duchess rocked, groaned and trembled, and then like an animal in mortal agony gnawing the earth, she started to bite hard and almost rhythmically on the bottom. Loose gear on deck was washed into the sea. We could only watch it go numbly, for there was nothing we could do. When Sven saw that the cabins were filling with water, he ordered everyone ashore.

In the dark I fancied I heard *Förste* murmuring to him, very formally,

"If *Kapten* thinks he's going to stay here alone, I'm staying, too."

I found a private moment to tell him myself that if he thought I was to be coerced into going ashore while he stayed here he was mistaken. But Sven's voice was quiet and a smile glimmered on his pale face, just visible in the gathering darkness.

"Don't you worry, either," he said, "I'm not a fool. I'm coming too."

So, groping for the ropes, we set off, and started to edge our way over the quaking bridge. *Kornt* and *Ernt* weren't in it.

As the stern wrenched and quivered, so the bridge slacked and jerked, dipping into the foaming shoulders of water which heaved up to snare it. Each of us was virtually alone when we reached the middle, for such frailty under such strain could not be trusted with any great weight. Wrack whirled in the air, which boiled in the cup of cliffs as passionately as the entrapped water.

All tumult seemed to be released in that dreadful place, not only in the clamour of the elements but in the clamour of each his own spirit. Each hand gripping a hard wet line, each foot toeing for a stance on the thrumming footrope—these were the only sensations that linked one with humanity. Swirls of rain added to the chaos. At last each was clambering up the slippery rock to gain the path.

We stood there starkly in the rain, looking down at the vision which appeared only as a dim silhouette when the white smother of breaking water tore over her. Perhaps it was only a few moments. Perhaps it was an hour. Time is a sorry gauge of

experience. Then without a word we started trudging along the cliff.

I was glad that it was now very dark and that the sea and wind raged noisily, for that vision had been too much for my fortitude, and I wept for the Duchess, deserted in that terrible spot.

Kneading down the sobs that wrenched me I became aware of my four companions: of Southon's unwilling legs which rooted him to the path, again and again, as he turned to look back, and so fell farther and farther behind: of Förste's long limbs, flung defiantly as he walked, though his chin, which he had used to thrust in the air, was now buried in his chest: of the phlegmatic second, stumbling and stumbling as if he were blind: and of Sven, a mere body tramping in front of me, his spirit elsewhere.

When we reached the faint radiance of the first street lamp, the demurely shuttered houses, the walled gardens, the kerbs, we might have been beings from another planet in masquerade on earth.

The porter at the hotel was on the look-out for us. An elderly man, endowed with cynical assurance in handling the tourist type of guest, he had made himself our friend by many unbidden services and was, by this time, unabashed in his devotion to "the cap'n". He had obviously been fidgeting for some time, anxious for us in the foul weather, for as we stepped into the light he was there, wringing his hands.

"Oh, sir——" he said, and stopped, struck silent by what must have been written clear on us.

He took Sven's cap, that once gorgeous headgear, whose gold wreath the gas had now tarnished to a sickly grey, and hung it over the heater.

"I'll see what I can do about getting you some food."

We convinced him that we couldn't eat it, but only wanted a room. The hotel was glaring with light, crammed with Saturday night jollity.

"Them!" said the porter, when later he came up with glasses of Ovaltine and sandwiches, "them down there, cackling away, they don't know what life is!"

He put the tray on the bedside table. Sven shook his head.

"It's just there, in case you and Mrs. Eriksson feel like a bite," said our friend. "No trouble at all, sir, and it don't go on the bill, neither. By all rights this 'ere hotel ought to put you up for nothing—made a fortune out of your misfortunes, they 'ave—What's a little Ovaltine!" He snorted as he withdrew.

Under his spell we drank the stuff. Years afterwards, when war with its beetroot coffee and raspberry-leaf tea was of the past, too, I again brewed Ovaltine for Sven, but he would not taste it.

"Not Ovaltine," he said. "The very smell of it means——"

I understood: for some people that is the most nostalgic of all the senses.

From the cliff next morning the picture of the Duchess was identical with the day's before—but when we came aboard one brief survey revealed that the storm had broken her back. She had worked some dozen feet into the sand, and there a hidden rib of rock must have cracked her spine.

The game was up. Repairs would now be costly beyond all reason—impractical as well, because however skilfully she was repaired she could never be the same strong ship again.

A pall of desolation robed the poor vessel. Sand and wheat were strewn in drifts about the deck, speckled with shreds of seaweed. Tangles of rope, planks, hatch covers, and tatters of tarpaulin littered every corner, and below deck nauseous black water lurked in all the cabins, crept up from the holds below. Gone was the smell of a living ship, and in its place hung the odour of dirt, decay and death.

Sven went ashore again at once to try to cable the owner. He planned to strip the ship of everything of value which would be useful to the rest of the fleet, if the owner would send one of his motor vessels to collect it.

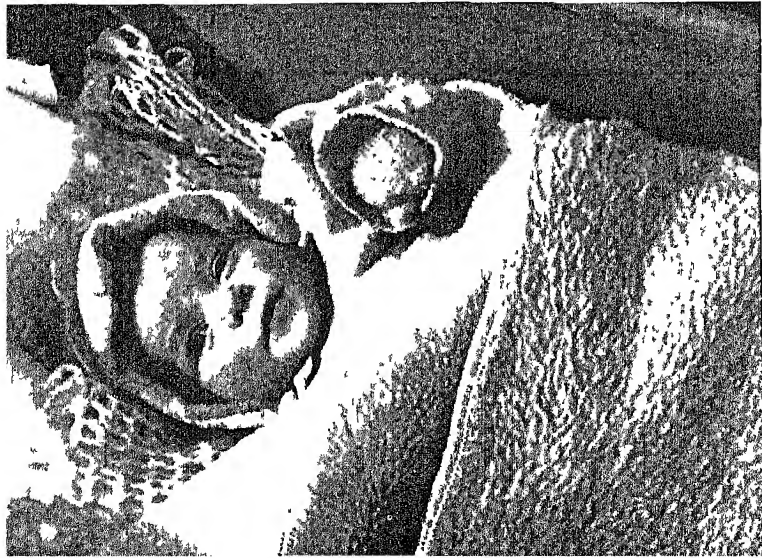
Conceivably, in the aftermath of battle, to strip a nameless

22 Ashore, by breeches buoy

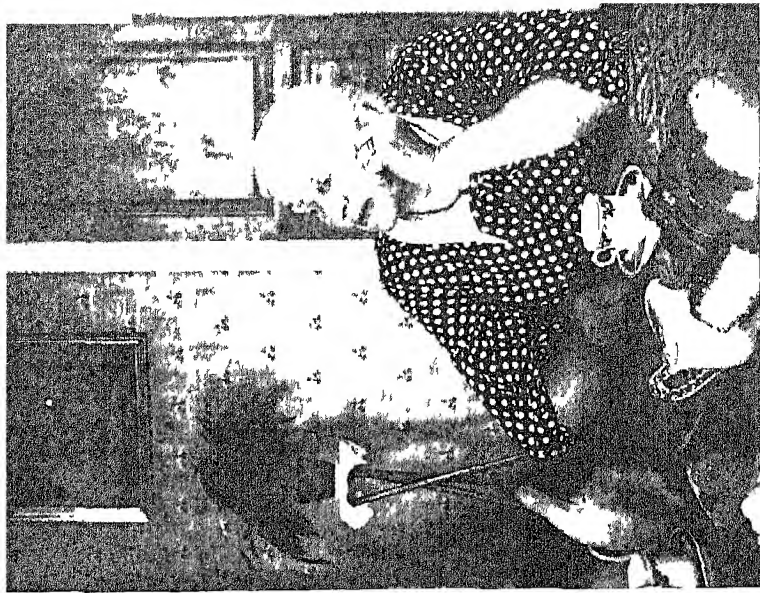


23 On the cliffs with Diana.





24. Sven-Cecilie. A funny sort of boy.



25. Irene Eriksson, mistress of Pellas.

corpse is no debasement, but to strip the corpse of one's beloved is an enormity few could face; for Sven it was no less than this. Though the sense of economy and orderliness in him was titillated the miserable and forlorn aspect which the once beautiful body of his Duchess now assumed was a sight so lacerating that his only protection was to arm himself with a callous intentness to do the stripping job with extreme efficiency.

The second mate, due to begin school for his master's ticket, asked to be signed off; and on 23rd July we saw that being of stocky phlegm, which the Duchess had matured to stalwart resolution, depart.

A gang from shore now hammered, wrenched and levered, with *Förste* and Southon tackling everything that needed a seaman's skill; and that was much, for aloft there was still all sorts of gear to be sent down for shipment home. We were expecting the owner's *Vera* from Mariehamn. What could be handled easily and was not likely to float away in a storm was piled on the poop.

For how many endless weeks now we had been hauling stuff out of *Herzogin*: wheat, and wheat, and more wheat, and now a giddy assortment of her bowels, masses of it, so that it seemed impossible that she could ever have been a neat, roomy, elegant ship with all that stowed in her. Hammer and wrench—hammer and wrench—prise it loose—lever it up—break it open—burn it off—the cacophony only ceased at night, when the four of us were alone in the ship, sleeping there until, when there was no more habitable corner, we had to berth ashore.

Nature's colossal irony sneered down at us, for now that the process of disintegration was inevitable not one more spell of bad weather interrupted it. When *Vera* finally arrived, she was able to lie alongside day after halcyon day, seldom troubled by the swell.

To be busy is the surest antidote for sighs. For Sven and myself there was no lack of work. When he could he helped me pack all that was small, precious and breakable into cases. The ship, equipped for carrying up to twenty passengers, had a large household inventory, and we ourselves had practically everything we

possessed on board. All had to be shipped home in *Vera*. By the day's end we were so fagged that there was luckily no energy left for coherent thought. We would eat, talk with casuals in the lounge, and flop to sleep in the impersonal hotel beds.

Numbness even softened the moment when, very carefully, almost respectfully, the shore carpenters began to take apart the captain's quarters: panels, pilasters, cornices, beading, carving, cupboards, drawers, skylight, sofas. Every smallest piece was checked and numbered, counterparted on a plan which would make it possible to reassemble it. Though we hankered morbidly to have it for our own, set-up at Pellas, it was destined for the long-planned nautical museum in Mariehamn. There it can now be seen, impressive enough, but a phantom of what it actually was when it was loved and lived in.

Cecilie herself, that enigmatic portrait of an actual woman, the daughter of the Duke of Brunswick, was removed by *Förste* and Southon with a sort of masterly reverence which I imagine priests adopt when forced to handle an idol. She lay with all the awkwardness of a dead, stiff body, on deck, her paint still bright and scarcely sullied. She too is now a dusty death mask in Mariehamn's museum, with small resemblance to the sun-dappled Mona Lisa, about whose skirts the porpoise played.

Into *Vera's* maw went all of it, meaningful and meaningless, the components of that entity which was so much greater than the sum of its parts.

I was at my old task again, typing lists. I had stood long hours hunched over the last bit of teak railing, tallying item by item as it was swung into *Vera's* holds, jotting a scrawl on the last empty pages of the logbook which now no longer was worth writing up.

1 meat mincer.

1 anchor.

120 fathoms anchor chain.

6 t'gallant yards.

3 royals.

1 teak companion way.
1 heaving line.
1 speaking tube.
3 chronometers.
1 coil manilla.
1 bunch marlinspikes.
1 Duchess Cecilie.

No, I thought, better put
1 figurehead.

For this is no more the Duchess Cecilie than Sven's dead body would be him—a husk, a mere dead grasshopper husk.

The weeks plodded relentlessly by, and at last Sven, with me tagging at his heels, prowled like a wolf through the skeleton of the ship, seeing that nothing had been forgotten.

The gaunt shells of port and starboard fo'c'sles, the desolate cavities that had been snug cabins, the echoing messroom, the gaping holes where companionways had reached, all was in order! Stripped and empty as it should be.

Then we stepped into what had been the steward's pantry. It was as forlorn as elsewhere, but a faint fragrance hung in the air, seeming to emanate from a dark corner laced with struts where once the store cupboards had stood. There, passed over in the dimness, were two drawers.

We pulled them out. One was half full of cardamom, that precious eastern spice, and the other contained a few handfuls of cloves.

Savagely Sven wrenched them out, and we stumbled away with them till we reached the main deck and there flung them into the sea. Then we fled into the shelter of the hole that had been the galley and hugged each other desperately, seeking comfort in all we had left.

Dimly, very dimly, I remembered what that English apprentice had once asked me.

"Is the skipper human?"

Whether *Förste* had funk'd this *Ultima Thule* I make no guess, but he had looked frayed enough when he asked to be signed off a few days beforehand. It now only remained to pay off Southon.

Matrosen Dick Southon

Per månadshyran f.o.m. den 20 maj—fmk. 500. i mån t.o.m. den 4 sept. 1936, utgörande 3 mån. 15 dag

—Summa fmk. 1750.

Salcombe, den 4 sept., 1936

Sven Eriksson.

R. M. Southon.

It was the last entry in *Herzogin Cecilie's* last log book.

The threads were all tied up, bills paid, thanks and farewells said, and the fund's monies returned to the donors, or where these could not be found, given to seamen's charities. The Lieutenant, if his money it had been, was rich now only in experience. Gustaf Erikson retrieved from the sale of the hull £200 odd, which did not cover the expenses of the ship since her stranding. He had lost *Herzogin*, and he had lost most of her 1936 freight, and the insurance rates for cargoes carried in sail had risen steeply because of her loss: so cargoes would be even more difficult to get. The man who bought the hull lost too, for he recovered not even a moiety of his £200. Sven and I had nearly empty pockets. Everyone, except the community of Salcombe which had battered on her, was the poorer for the Duchess's unconscionable time a-dying. Materially the poorer, perhaps, but not therefore poorer in spirit.

To Irene Eriksson, writing letters to us from Pellas, a wreck was a wreck—family history was peppered with them.

"Don't struggle on there with that wretched ship, dear boy," she wrote. "You won't get any thanks for it. You and Pamie come back to Pellas. Especially as you say there's a baby in the offing."

In the offing, maybe, but now definitely making my travelling clothes a tight fit. Of the lore of babies I was profoundly ignorant, having been, in adolescence, too uninterested to register any information that came my way. Indeed, for the five months we had been on the Devon coast, only spasms of hunger had ever reminded me that we were going to have a baby. It was something, I dimly knew, that modern women made a tremendous fuss about.

When we reached London and there had to wait a few days for a passage to Finland, Sven firmly steered me to a large department store which specialized in all requirements for expectant mother and child. Gradually the fun he was having in choosing patent nappies, the right sort of safety pins, cot blankets and, finally, expanding garments for me, infected me and I rashly succumbed to his enthusiasm in securing a gossamer-weight, faerily embroidered, frilly little dress which the ensuing infant wore only once before its alarming growth burst the seams.

When Farmor (as we henceforth spoke of her) showed me the beribboned, satin-fluted outfit which she and *Farfar* had bought some fifty years before in Paris, when their first child, Sven's eldest brother Filip, was expected, I realized that this was a ritual for the first-born well established in the Pellas family.

Part Five

A FUNNY SORT OF BOY

X

Pellas

WHEN Pellas welcomed home a scion she made no difference between he who came aglow with fortune or he who was scarred by misfortune: that he belonged to Pellas and was home again sufficed. After the five grim months on the Devon coast, lived among a welter of strangers, ever in the public eye and at the mercy of nature, the balm of home did much to heal our chafed spirits.

The roof was wide and sheltering, the walls solid, and the windows bright. Everything had been swept and garnished for our arrival. The copper coffee kettle glowed beneath the stove canopy, and Farmor herself poured the libation before she settled herself to hear news of the journey. For no undue questions disturbed the bliss of this warm welcome, no clumsy inquiries that would compel us to disclose that passionate desperation with which we had lived the last five months. Incurious, too, the perky barquentines sailed round the walls on their docile waves. Sipping the strong coffee, laced with rich cream, I became aware of the deep decorum which is the basis of tradition. Not Sven alone, of mariners unlucky, was hailed thus on return: all such sons of that close-knit seafaring Åland tribe received it as their due.

Sharper than the previous year, I felt a dear familiarity with Pellas, a familiarity whose eerie pulse sometimes beat with astonishing clamour. This, this and this had been mine before, it

said, leaving me bewildered but strangely content. Yet Pellas, its life and traditions, was so remote from everything that I had been born and bred to, that reasonable explanation there was none. Nor had I any command of the language which reverberated round me, and into which I occasionally launched a remark liable to make the company wince by its nautical pungency: for my Swedish vocabulary was still that of a barque's deck, in spite of Sven's endeavours to alter it. By the New Year it had enlarged, but not to the extent of appreciating the dry humour with which Åland talk was redolent: so that when Irene Lindqvist, the parish midwife, told me that if I did not dry behind my infant's ears mushrooms would grow there, I was round-eyed with horror at the vision of fungi sprouting in that delicate crevice.

Pellas was the solar plexus of a widespread clan. We had not been more than a few days returned, when invitations to visit various outlying groups arrived, invariably by telephone, which all Ålänning use with nonchalant relish for entertainment and social intercourse. No Åland telephone lacks its chair for the user. At Pellas, the most comfortable chair in the room was beside the telephone. In this, sitting relaxed and attentive, Farmor had almost daily contact with several of her children and grandchildren, and with one or other of her sisters: Hinders Amelia, Sjustrands Nanni, or Moster Ida from Lemström.

It was to Hinders that we were first invited, Farmor's old home, now under the aegis of Amelia and her daughter Emmi, each the relict of a departed mariner. Amelia's long-deceased captain was only remembered vaguely as having been red-headed, but Emmi's young husband had not long before been lost, when a big new Finnish steamer, in which he was a mate, foundered in the Pentland Firth. Her two brothers were both sea captains, who sometimes appeared with their families to spend summer holidays at Hinders.

It was Emmi, handsome, energetic and dominant, who ran the farm and was known to put her hand to the plough herself if no neighbour had time to help her. She and her mother, too busy

to live in the state required by the splendours of the big house, snugly occupied the bakehouse cottage. Work-a-day visitors, which we later became, were blithely welcomed here.

But when the whole gamut of a traditional Åland party was to be run, with coffee three times, full course dinner (of which the *smörgåsbord* would have made a week's English meals), tea and *smörgås*, and soup to speed the midnight departure, the mansion of Hinders, which Mattias Lundqvist, Sven's grandfather, had built, was the milieu.

I had already pondered over his powerful face, which looked down so commandingly from the walls of Pellas, flashing vitality and pride, in the trappings of full beard and mane of white hair—a man, so I was told, who had risen to command and ownership by force of personality and business acumen, for he had been a "parish child".

Even in the stilted old photograph his face was incredibly striking. Now that so many of them were gathered in the home that he had built I saw how deep his stamp had been on some of his descendants: those level eyes and leonine brows, features delineated with a boldness that was never coarse.

His daughters were impressive women, even in old age. What his sons had been like I could only guess from family gossip, until years later some of them were hostilely depicted in the famous novel *Katrina*, written by Sally Salminen. Here they served as models for the bold bad captains of Åland who oppressed the poor, including the heroine, Katrina. You should have heard Farmor snort as she rocked herself in her rocking chair, perusing this best-seller. She made some trenchant remarks about writers and their fantasies which I keep in mind to this day, respectful of her shade!

Hinders was not a mansion by western European standards, but I soon found that it was confusing to try to apply these in Åland. A proud establishment of its day, which must have dawned in the fifties, it stood on a grassy slope framed in trees. Though now its wooden face was slightly askew with age, when Mattias

Lundqvist had erected it, it had been a symbol of wealth and dignity in the parish. Much smaller than Pellas, it had an elegance which our Noah's ark lacked.

Moster Amelia, confiding some family chat to me, aided by an interpreter, exclaimed:

"Irene! Why, when she was a girl nothing would satisfy her but to have dancing lessons in Åbo! She always got her way, too, twisting pappa round her little finger!"

The tang of childhood jealousy for a brilliant elder sister still tainted her voice. There sat Farmor, so old, so stately, and so work-worn, a model for all matriarchs. I was thrilled to learn that she had once wheedled for dancing lessons in Åbo!

Mattias's four daughters must have been a handful. At seventy Amelia's eyes still glowed, large, brown and irrepressibly merry, though the years had trapped them in a shrewd set of wrinkles. Nanni, a few years younger, still retained the air of a tom boy. Her eyes were large, too, but blue, and when she laughed and laid down the law they blazed. Only Ida, the eldest, was small. Her exquisitely shaped skull defied age to wither her beauty by dehydrating her flesh. Nothing came out of her mouth that was not rather sharply wise.

She and Farmor had always been firm friends, and every spring she would spend some weeks at Pellas, bringing her spinning wheel. There, each at one of the kitchen windows, where the snow-gleam enhanced the light, the two old ladies would sit spinning steadily, exchanging leisurely gossip that spanned Åland's (but principally Lemland's) affairs for many decades.

At approved intervals Farmor would rise, move the coffee kettle to the centre ring and insert a few billets under it. When Sven and I came in, resinous and rubicund, from the day's timber work in the forest, the two of them would be at the table, sipping *på bit*, which is the only way to get the full flavour of the best Brazilian, and yet have it sweet. Put a hard top-grade sugar lump in your mouth and sip the coffee through that. Read Tolstoi for a fuller appreciation.

Moster Ida had a talent for dry anecdote. The heyday of the barquentines, whose portraits decked hers as well as her sister's homes, was a colourful time as Moster Ida related it. How smartly dressed the skippers were, with their top hats, frock coats and gold watch-chains! The stiff collars of their shirts kept their chins high. Many of them, in their pride, wore these clothes at sea. Just think of Wessingsboda Calle—he bought an entire outfit, gutta-percha dicky, collar and all, and wore it continuously day and night until—well, until his chief mate suggested it was time to buy another one.

"*Fi fan!*" said Sven, wrinkling his nose so expressively that one could almost sniff the memory of Wessingsboda Calle!

What a turmoil there had been at Pellas when Erik and August, father and son, were preparing ships for the summer trade. The men were busy enough, but the women were hard put to it to find time, what with food for all the working folk and visitors galore, and baking those hundreds and hundreds of loaves to be dried for ship's bread. But Erik, and August too, wanted everything on time, and after that particular day they always got it, to the stroke of the clock.

"Yes, after that they always got it," remarked Farmor. "The wretched men!"

The trouble that day was the yeast, or perhaps they had not warmed up the place enough beforehand. At any rate, the bread wouldn't rise, and as the whole bakehouse was full they had overflowed into the big building. The long and the short of it was that when the Pellas men came up from the ships with all their workmen and a whole crowd of fine folk who had come to inspect the ships and whom Pellasen had invited to dinner, every table, bench and trestle in the house was covered with cloths on which the round flat loaves were still rising.

"So!" said Pellasen, "is the food not ready?"

Yes, it was ready, but the bread could not be put in to the ovens for a little while, so the tables could not be laid. They would have to wait.

Pellaseen said no more. He simply gathered the tablecloths up by their corners, and dumped them, bread and all, in a corner. Then he motioned to his guests to sit down.

"Yes, Pellaseen was known as a man to be obeyed," concluded Ida.

A glimmer of a smile twitched at the corner of Farmor's mouth, indicative of some time when she had got the better of him. We all waited for her to speak. At last she said:

"He was very obstinate—especially about the kitchen floor. One day, when all the men had gone to the forest and I was alone in the house, I thought to myself, 'This is the last time I am going down on my knees to scrub this huge kitchen floor white. It's ridiculous to want it white and scrubbed like a deck, when it would be much easier to keep clean and pretty if it was painted. Everyone then was beginning to paint their floors. Well, the only paint we had in the house was scarlet, so I took that—and when they all came back from the forest, the floor was scarlet.'"

Pellaseen—a man to be obeyed—but a man you could get the better of! Sven, too, was a man to be obeyed, but those who tried to get the better of him found themselves clutching air. His spirit would be standing somewhere else, smiling at them, aloof, parrying whatever they did with a generosity which made his fellow Ålänning exclaim:

"Why, Sven—there's a real gentleman!"—an expression which at first made my English susceptibilities cringe. Later I realized it was only their awkward way of describing his illusive virtues.

One Sunday Farmor was in the mood to unlock some of the bureaux in *salan*. Here were kept innumerable ancient letters, among which later Georg Kähre was to delve for his history of Åland's sailing ships. Here too was much of that treasure-trove that will accumulate through the generations in every settled family.

Gold chains, gold watches—some of them mere primitive knobs—gold rings and various trinkets lay strewn on the plush tablecloth from Chile. A few were so old that even Farmor was

not acquainted with their origin. A great gold ring, set with an inch-and-a-half cornelian, was startling in its size. It even dangled loosely on Sven's massive thumb. Surely it was centuries old, the signet of some gigantic ancestor who must have flourished before the Great Unrest.

This period was talked about with such familiarity (it was only just outside the rim of topical gossip) that I was nonplussed when I inquired the date—the turn of the 17th century.

To escape the harrying Russians every man, woman and child in Åland had migrated for eight years to Sweden. The hordes had swept over Åland, pillaging and burning, so that not a dwelling remained. The churches, of stone and difficult to raze, had stood alone in the islands, the only shelter for the destitute inhabitants when they finally returned.

In Granboda only one homestead, Callas, still had its original deeds, and that was because some alert member of the family had buried them in a waterproof covering before he fled.

When all the rings and chains and watches and trinkets were re-wrapped in tissue paper and stowed in their boxes—which were jewellers' packings from Paris, London, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, Lisbon, Valparaiso, New York, San Francisco and Sydney—Farmor leant her elbow on the table and, chin in hand, gazed thoughtfully at Sven and me, listening to the English in which he was explaining to me things I might not have understood. As he paused, she said:

"Ah, well, it's not surprising you married an English wife. After all, your grandfather was the son of an English milord."

"So they say!" he chuckled as he recollected, "though I'd forgotten all about that."

"Who?" I asked, pricking my ears. "What was his name?"

"No one nowadays remembers that. It was difficult to pronounce, I suppose, so he was just called 'milord'."

"But was Mattias Lundqvist his son?"

"Yes—and when his mother married some respectable person in Flakka, the husband wouldn't take the child and he was cast on

the parish. It was so in those days. He probably went to sea when he was about ten, pretty thin and ragged."

"But how did a milord get to Flakka?"

"It must have been in the Napoleonic wars. There was an English squadron anchored there in Flakka vik for quite a time. Some English sailors are buried on one of those islets. Emmi sometimes feels sorry for them—so far from home, she says—and rows out to put flowers on their graves."

"But if the milord was there for some time surely a few traditions would have been handed down about him? Doesn't anyone in Flakka remember anything?"

"No, they don't," said Sven firmly. "The milord may have been a young spark of a midshipman or a crusty old commander. We just don't know."

"Well," I said obstinately, "it's clear as daylight that whatever his milordliness was he was one of Nelson's breed. Look at his descendants! Practically every man jack of them has had command of a ship, and the females have all nabbed shipmasters as husbands!"

Later in the day, strolling on the lovely birch-dotted pasture of Bokholm, which jutted far out into Lumparen and had a granite dancing floor from pagan times at its rocky tip, Sven exclaimed that mine was probably the first English foot set there since "those English sailors stole our calves."

"English sailors, again!" I said. "No milords this time?"

"No, the devils," he said, "stealing our fat calves!"

"Couldn't you have put the police on them?"

He looked at me witheringly.

"They were here fighting the Russians," he said, "and I don't think we had any police then. It was a long time ago, you know. The Crimea business, I think."

It was very disconcerting, this Åland habit of talking about history in terms of a local event last year. I met it again when we went to visit the second mate's family in Flakka.

The Lemans lived on the butt of a long headland which one

reached by a rutted, grassy track through nut glades. They were the traditional pilots for the main lead through the archipelago on the passage from Stockholm to Åbo. Algot's sister took me down to the cannon-ball beach and showed me "where the king had swum out and stabbed the elk."

I thought of the aged Gustav, then on the throne of Sweden and still able to pot his elk from a strategically placed chair, but if he had swum, this must have been when he was young.

"Not Gustav!" she exclaimed. "It was Charles XIII! He was very keen on hunting, you know. They say that Lemland still has the best elk hunting in the North, just as in his day."

We had returned to the Baltic at the end of September. At that season, year after year, *Herzogin* had been wont to depart for Australia. Now all the fleet was on the move again and she was not with them. Neither Sven nor I could banish from our minds the image of her picked skeleton, forlorn and alone, in autumn storm.

*Of all the tides I knew
Will not one lift me from this bed and make
Me once again my own——*

But it was two years before this was to happen, though storm came in plenty, friends wrote, swept over her and smothered her. She seemed to alter no more than the rocks that ringed her.

From Åland the square rig sailors were also departed, so that Sven had not one contemporary crony of his own calling with whom to exchange a word. All the shore talk was of the bigness of *Moshulu*, which Gusta had bought in America the year before. He had written to Sven in Salcombe that if he had known what the loss of *Herzogin* would mean, and that the freights would show every sign of continuing low, he would never have purchased her. Big she might be, but she would never be another *Herzogin*.

"It seems to me," wrote one of the captains, "though there are some fine barques gathered here in Copenhagen this year too, it was really the end of sail when *Herzogin* went—the swan song. Ah, Sven, some of us were born too late!"

One could not help but sigh for her, and I, for one, when the years should long have dulled the poignancy, would find myself wiping the ooze of tears from my cheeks at the very thought of that gallant, that beautiful, that sad celebrity.

Dreary thoughts might have darkened our lives if we had been middle-aged, with mediocre memories: but we were not. Sven was thirty-three, and I twenty-eight, and we had both had long spells in life of living our heart's desire—but this desire had always been in some way bound up with the Duchess. Dead she might be, but to us she had bequeathed some secret glory which was not ruled by death.

The feeling of bereavement which scarred Sven was overlaid by an intense interest in what we were going to produce in the way of offspring. I tried to hide my disappointment that this event could not now take place at sea, for this had been my naïve hope.

Farmor, on learning that we had not consulted any medical authority whatever, and that I only had a very vague idea as to when the baby was likely to arrive, was so alarmed that she scolded Sven, and went at once to the telephone to arrange a state visit to Irene Lindqvist, the parish midwife.

It was only then I realized I did not know the first thing about having, or looking after, a baby. Surveying their rather pale and coddled progeny it appeared to me very unsafe to rely on the tuition of the local mothers.

In this dilemma I bethought me of a little old man, who, when I visited him in Auckland, was intent on growing the paragons of all strawberries, firm, rosy and luscious. New Zealand was decked with the results of a former interest of his, also firm, rosy and luscious, but a great deal more mobile than Truby King's strawberries, which he grew in barrels. I wrote at once to London and ordered his manual on baby-rearing.

It was evident that to carry out Truby King's instructions in the middle of the Finnish winter would require as much hardiness from mother as from child. "The baby should sleep out of doors in the daytime, or screened from draught before an open window if this is not possible. See diagram."

Sven and I studied the diagram. Then he said, stating a fact which conveyed little to me then, for I only knew the cold of Switzerland,

"The temperature usually falls here in January and February to minus twenty-five."

Truby King allowed a hot water bottle, if necessary, and advised a "baby bag". This we ordered from England, and then Sven set about making a special cradle. He selected birch which had been seasoning in the wagon shed rafters for twenty years. The cradle had to be deep, so that the baby would be sheltered from the wind; wide, so that it would not exclude any sunlight and there would be room for the hot water bottles; light, so that it could be carried; and, of course, pretty, too.

We had a team of men at work, easing modern plumbing into Pellas. One of them was a ship's carpenter. It was he who finally made the cradle. I watched his hunched back and withered little face as he worked at it.

He was quite a young man, but he had had "*engelska sjukan*" the English sickness. I felt secretly insulted that rickets should be called this. *Engelska sjukan* was the bugbear of every Åland mother. Farmor talked about it as if it was almost inevitable and every day I saw poor, bent, indomitable little Ebba, my sister-in-law, dragging herself about with the greatest difficulty, just because she had had it badly as a child. But Farmor blamed her state on a cricked back due to having been her grandfather's favourite, whom he used to toss in the air as a baby, to make her crow.

Truby King said that no baby would get rickets if it was given mother's milk, plenty of fresh air and sunlight, and later good, vitaminy food. Luckily, my Swedish was too poor to lay down

the Truby King law and so enrage my female relations, who had quite rightly summed me up as not "*barn kär*", and therefore, in their opinion, unskilled in the treatment of children.

"*Barn kär*"—no phrase or word in English describes it, but it is that comfortable, loving, open-armed, understanding, glowing feeling one can have when children are about—any children, not only one's own. It was what made Sven scoop up his toddling nieces and nephews on the pretext of wiping their noses—it was what sent sobbing little creatures scrambling onto Farmor's lap—it was what gave Ebba delight as she furiously embroidered a frieze of blue robin redbreasts to hop round the new cradle. It was a virtue rampant at Pellas, and common to many Ålännings, perhaps accounting for their children's winning behaviour. But I was not *barn kär*—alas, I could hold a capstan bar with more tenderness and confidence than a baby!

"Never mind," said Sven. "You've got Mamma and Ebba and Mery, and they're all spoiling to help you. Besides, now you've got Truby King!"

We read further in his sagacious manual, and on his next visit to Mariehamn, Sven bought a baby scale.

"It will do for cakes, afterwards," he remarked.

Such a stir was in the house, what with the alterations and the coming of Christmas, that one almost expected Erik and August to walk in and demand their dinner. Both of them would have been horrified at the blasting of bedrock beside the front door, where a septic tank had somehow to be inserted a metre below the surface to ensure against winter freezing. But finally, when the bathroom and water closet were a reality and we could sit enthroned without having our bottoms frozen blue (which was the special quality of the commodious outside privy they had once been so proud of), I felt sure that they, too, would have rejoiced in this new splendour for their beloved Pellas.

That year no snow came before Christmas, though at times the usual autumn storms belaboured the house. Even the giant timbers of Pellas quivered to their marrow as gust after northerly

gust cuffed its way over the forest and pounced on the great roof.

Others endured the storm, content to see that the boats were well drawn up before seeking some indoor occupation, but Sven and I liked to battle our way out to Vinbärsön or Norskogs udd, those granite spearheads thrust into raging Lumpar, and there stand above the whirling spindrift, where dinning tumult gave us something of the old exhilaration of deck in storm.

On the anvil of wind and water Sven's manhood had been hammered to maturity: though he was never again to pit his skill against them, their challenge always roused his spirit and we would gleam understanding at each other in wordless joy.

Not that he was above snuggling under the bedclothes on a stormy night and saying,

"Thank God I don't have to go on deck!"

Everyone seemed to expect him to get restive. Old sailors chipped him,

"Nå, Sven, tell us, aren't you getting restless?"

"Sometimes," he would admit, "but when *Herzogin* no longer sails, the sea's not so alluring, either."

I alone guessed—and blessed—the truth: the ark was mercifully replacing the barque.

Next door to Pellas stood Andersas, an ark too, but on a slightly smaller scale, though almost equally impressive. Indeed, it was due to the grandeur of Andersas that Pellas was all that larger and more capacious. Prosperity had been won by these two up-and-coming seafaring families almost simultaneously. When Andersas' ambition had erected this modern mansion just the other side of the fence from his rather tumbledown old homestead, Pellas had laid his plans to eclipse it. Farmor could remember it all, for she had come as a bride when they were a-building. She still savoured the spice of triumph in having gone one better than the neighbours.

Of all the living generation of Andersas only one now followed the sea. The master himself, Vivian Sviberg, was a farmer, every

inch of him. He might well have served as a model for John Bull, though there was a certain rufous quality about him, a certain shrewd glint in his blond eyes, that revealed the pure Scand. He had had no liking for the sea and had emigrated to America, but, striking the depression, had returned to the fields and forests of his ancestral home.

Vivian watched Sven's first attempts at ploughing with a wry smile, amused to see the way he covered up his lack of skill by feats of strength.

"You've still got it all left, my boy," he remarked. "Eight years as a skipper doesn't wear a man's body out,—but it's only a light plough!"

That put Sven on his mettle. He promptly bought the biggest and heaviest Oliver that could be drawn by two horses, and persevered till he could handle it deftly.

Vivian was a ruthless modern. He was the only man in Granboda who owned a car. It was this vehicle which was to shoot off and fetch Irene Lindqvist when I judged the appointed hour had come. I was too proud to ask anyone, not even Sven, just how I should judge. So many babies had been born at Pellas. Surely the *hus tompta*, the house goblin who is a benign if slightly mischievous friend to every Åland family, would warn me. If he didn't, I was perfectly confident in Sven's skill as a midwife, for he had admitted that he had learnt something about it in Navigation School. Åland master mariners were certainly well trained to meet all emergencies.

As the Duchess had changed her suit of sails for the different latitudes, keeping her new double noughts for winter in the Southern oceans, and her lighter, older canvas for the trades and doldrums, so Pellas also had her seasonal wardrobe—curtains, mats, cloths, wall hangings. All these had now to be laid away, ready for the great spring wash, so that they would be fresh and clean for Midsummer, that other time of ritual robing in the calendar.

Down from the great cavern of the attic we bore the many rolls

of winter matting, and when it was spread on the newly painted floors there was a faint tang of the sea in the house, and a few grains of sand here and there: for in Lumpar the winter matting is washed in August and spread to dry on the shore. A yard wide and merrily striped in rough cords of colour, the Pellas winter mats would have stretched for a quarter of a mile—if they had not been carefully overlapped an inch or so in the living rooms to form a complete cover.

"Look out for your old clothes when the women take it into their heads to weave mats," said Sven. "I still remember the rumpus when Pappa found that his third best Sunday trousers were the black stripes in the new *salan* mats."

This merriest and gayest of all floor covering had its origin in the faded and threadbare cast-offs of the family, supplemented by fishing nets too ragged to repair, worn-out bed linen, and anything else that could be cut into ribbons. Everything that was dyable was dyed, and the undyable made the darkish, neutral background. These mats, though made of worn fabric, were incredibly strong, for they could be expected to last, with mending, for some fifteen years.

Sven showed me the very ancient loom, an immense black frame hung in sections on the wall of the hay loft.

"When the spring sun on the snow makes a bright light indoors," he explained, "then the women begin to agitate, and the men have to take down the loom and set it up, and thread the warp ready for them. Clack, clack, clack, they weave away like fury and leave you in peace—but the danger comes when they are nearing the end and find they haven't enough to finish the length. Then you have to watch out for any old clothes that you are rather fond of but aren't using just as the moment—because they don't have any scruples when they are in that state!"

Before the mats were spread a great deal else had been done—first everything that could be washed was washed: floors, ceilings, all paintwork and windows, the ten-foot-high white-tiled stoves, and the crystals of the chandeliers. Then everything that could be

polished was polished; brass candlesticks, silver beakers, trays and dishes, door knobs, keyholes, and, of course, all the furniture that had not been the kind you wash. The windows, both inner and outer, had to shine without blemish for once the double windows were inserted and the cracks sealed with special white paper, any smudge would be there till next midsummer.

Finally Ebba, who had starched and ironed all the embroidered hangings, cloths and curtains, brought them out and they were set with reverence in their appointed places. A good while before every cupboard and drawer had been turned out, washed and tidied. Not even the array of pot-plants had escaped, for every leaf and tendril had been wiped and their earthy beds smoothed and tucked in. Only the cyclamen buds had missed a toilet, for it might have discouraged them from blooming for Christmas.

We ourselves were very weary, very grubby, and quite dilapidated, with still a great deal to do; but as each room became ready we sat down for a few minutes in it, just to enjoy it. There was nothing of very great value in any of the rooms, but no sweeter, fresher, more loved and cared-for home could be wished for. It would be impossible to keep it like that for long, but at least we had realized an ideal.

First among the confusion and then during the tranquil state, Farmor moved with fixed purpose, to prepare enough of a great variety of food to keep us going till New Year—us and a prodigious assortment of guests. When the criterion for a mere coffee party was *shivor och bullar och sexton sorter* (fine bread and buns and sixteen sorts of cake and biscuit), the baking alone occupied two days. She would bake, too, three or four kinds of bread, some of it the black, luscious malt bread peculiar to Åland, which people seldom bothered to make now as it took three days to prepare, with all its various yeastings and kneadings which might have to take place in the middle of the night, so imperious a dough was it.

Mery helped her mother. She had her own home within hailing distance on the edge of the forest, but her world still revolved

round Pellas, and there was all her joy. It seemed to be no hardship for her to have Linus away for ten months in the year sailing deepwater in the barques. She shared young Leif with her mother and sister, and lived her toilsome life with such energy and cheerfulness that the web of it was a great deal richer and brighter than the captains wives' who lived in up-to-date splendour in Mariehamn. In all the years we lived at Pellas I never saw her enter without feeling a spurt of pleasure that she had come.

Not long after we had arrived back from England Sven had marked down the young fir that was to be the Christmas tree. On the eve of Christmas Eve we felled it on Bokholm and drove it home. Then all its long-preserved trappings of stars, balls and tinsel were unearthed, and the new candles and marzipan pigs laid out, and presently all was a-sparkle and a-bob where it stood at one of the tall windows facing the road.

Sven marshalled every candlestick he could lay hands on and went round putting them in all the windows. What a benign custom that was—as folk drove to church on Christmas morning, the darkling hour was blessed by the winkings from every window, and in each house, too, stood the little galaxy of the Christmas tree, beaming out on the wintry world.

Midday dinner on Christmas Eve was not much more than a bite and a sup; but the house was adrift with delicious whiffs from the pans and ovens which Farmor was manipulating, some in the kitchen, some in the bakehouse. She had been pounding cardamom in a brass mortar, and I could not help but choke at the fragrance which brought back to us the most desolate hour either of us had known.

Before night closed down, just after three, Sven was busy on all sorts of mysterious errands, involving parcels and sacks. Last of all he came up from the *ladugård* with a huge sheaf of oats which he set up on the gatepost, so that the birds, too, should have their Christmas fare. Cows, sheep and pigs, all under one roof in the great *ladugård*, were already munching the extra

rations which for them were the symbol of peace and goodwill on earth.

Unknown to me, everyone had planned for the baby to arrive in time for Christmas. Sven shook his head whimsically at me.

"It's a terrible disappointment," he said. "All its presents wrapped, and Irene Lindqvist looking forward to spending a luscious Christmas eating here, and Vivian practically sleeping in his boots——"

He began lighting the Christmas tree.

"You must buck up!" he went on. "I'm just as curious as everyone else to see what it looks like. I wonder what Paik will say when he sees it? It's not at all in his line."

I laughed helplessly.

"Well, it isn't really in mine, either, Sven," I said, "and I'm just as curious to see it. I daresay we'll think it b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l whatever it looks like, and Paik will regard it as a little intruding monster, and Farmor and Ebba will do their best to spoil it—and I shall stick to Truby King through thick and thin!"

Paik had at last learnt to share his master with me. His long quarantine in London had somewhat chastened his arrogance, though once he was on board ship with us, en route for Finland, it flowered afresh. Intermittent fumings from the cantankerous old captain failed to persuade Sven to persuade Paik to remain in the huge crate on deck. He sauntered insolently at our heels, and lifted his lip at anyone who approached either Sven—or me. When he, in the shelter of our cabin, laid his chin on my lap and gazed soulfully into my face, my heart melted within me, so unexpected was this token of his regard.

And now, in a short while, after weathering the cataclysm which had convulsed his world, and adapted himself to a mistress, a sheepskin under the kitchen bench and the intrusion of other dogs—now, when he was already past middle age, once again he would have to widen his heart. I was sorry for Paik, sitting there on his haunches with his ears pricked, following every movement Sven made as he lighted the candles.

To think of that Christmas now, when we only had Paik, is to try to remove a lacquer of the images of all the other Christmasses when the glowing eyes and ruddy lips of our children be-jewelled the ritual. Always limpid with expectation was the moment when we had eaten the *piråg*, the baked ham, the spiced potato pie, the rice, raisin and almond porridge, and some creamy frippery invented by Ebba to please the modern palate, and, formally thanking Farmor for the good food, migrated to *stuga*, where the Christmas tree glinted, there to sip coffee and sample the Christmas baking while we waited for the arrival of the "*jul tompsta*."

What a moment of gasping anticipation and screwing-up of small toes and fingers as a thud was heard in the front hall and suddenly, hauling a great knobbly sack, in rushed the bearded gnome, gibbering a Christmas greeting, and wagglng his tall red pointed cap!

He would grope tantalizingly in his sack, and then in a stentorian voice read out the names on the parcels, one by one, as he fished them out. Sometimes he would present them very politely with a bow. Sometimes he would be in quite a rage and hurl them (especially if they were large and soft) at our heads. Once the *tompsta* lifted a leghorn hen (unwrapped) out of his sack and presented it to Farmor, who had been complaining that her hens would not lay for Yule. She thanked him gravely and kept the hen sitting in her lap. Later, unnoticed, it hopped down, and when the last parcel had been opened and we were clearing up before going to bed, the hen was discovered sitting in the nest-like cavity which was the oven of the tile stove. There it had complacently laid an outsize egg!

Sometimes, hot on the first one's heels, came another *tompsta*, and sometimes, too, a third would turn up, with his sack all but empty, and demand a dance with everyone before he went back to the forest. He was usually rather a rough-footed dancer, whirling the children, and even making Farmor dance, but he took care not to overturn the piles of parcels which lay beside

each chair. If he was very bold, he would swagger up to Sven and demand a "sup", and Sven would pour him out a minute glass of *brännvin* to join the others which already could be heard joggling in his stomach.

Astonishing to me was the fact that one never knew who the presents were from! I might guess that those homespun hand-knitted long stockings that I got every year were from Farmor, because she always seemed to be busy knitting such-like as Christmas approached—and that the torch in the form of a night-light was from my canny young nephew Harald who was well acquainted with the midnight demands of babies—but taxed with these gifts, both Farmor and Harald would look secretively blank.

Christmas day itself was always spent at home, after a late breakfast on return from church. If snow had come the far tinkling of sleigh bells warned the one who had stayed to look after the lighted tree and the window candles when to put one of the *pirågs* and potato pies in the oven to warm up as an accompaniment to the still huge, pinkly luscious, bread-crumb frosted ham, when we all sat down to Yule breakfast. Eaten off damask, home-woven from flax which Farmor's mother had probably tended, it was a meal of more significance than the sum of its edible items. It was as if the very essence which, slowly distilled through the centuries, had formed the entity of Pellas, its abode and its people, had, at Yule, gathered in some mysterious vial, the catalyst which fused the generations.

So vital and penetrating was the effulgence from this vial that I, myself rapidly being distilled into it, felt a dizzy need to clutch at my own identity. I acknowledged myself a stranger and an alien—yet here all was dear and familiar.

The baby, much now to everyone's relief, did not arrive on Christmas day; nor on the second day of Yule, as it was called; nor on the third. There was much bidding to and fro to coffee parties and to dinners, for traditionally little work was done between Yule and New Year. If the men went to the forest they did so more to get away from the womenfolk, and to work up

their flagging appetites in the fresh air, than for any serious activity.

In the slack water, before the New Year's tide came rolling over us with its fresh spate of food and festivity, Mery gave a coffee party in her gleaming new home.

There was a hard frost outside and all at once I longed to be out in it, away from the warm welcome of the rooms, the cheerful babble, the chink of silver spoons and the rivulets of laughter. I feigned tiredness, and whispered to Sven that I would slip away and go home to bed, adding,

"For heaven's sake don't come trundling after me if you are enjoying yourself here. I'm only tired."

Unobserved, I stepped out into the hazy moonlight. Underfoot, the faintest "crunk" betrayed the gathering hoar frost. Forest hung sombrely to the right of the path. There was no waft of air, no sound except the enclosed buzz of the coffee party, which dampened down to silence as I walked slowly up the hill towards the long level rooftop of the *Iadugård* and the pyramid of Pellas eastern gable against the luminous sky.

I was not tired, unless you can call the surge of a great river thrusting up against its bore, tired. Every inch of skin on my now cumbersome frame was tingling with energy. It seemed to be bursting out, so that I was beside myself with the sensation of being enormously bigger than my body. I would have liked to have leapt up and swung from one of the branches of that gnarled trio of pines which stood below the stable. My body's wisdom prevailed and the leap remained a fancy. But there, in the cow-shed, was an outlet for this exuberance. I went in.

Little moonlight entered through the windows, set in the four-foot-thick walls. The cows heard me, and some of them sighed and rustled to their feet, without stopping the cud-chewing whose rhythm filled the place. The big tank which supplied their drink was all but empty. I started to pump.

Sweat and content were beading all over me by the time Sven

poked his head in through the door to see who could be there, pumping.

"Ja—it's me."

"But, Pamie—you were tired——"

"Well, no, actually I'm still bursting with energy in spite of the pumping."

"Funny creature!"

I let him top up the tank.

"Funny creature——" he murmured again sleepily, when I nudged him awake after midnight.

"Sven, I've really got an awful stomach ache."

He was blazingly awake in a second, just as if the helmsman had let her up into the wind, I thought as I heard him rush to Farmor's bedroom and then to the telephone.

"I've sent Vivian for Irene Lindqvist," he announced, coming back and lighting the big lamp.

No good to tell him it was only Mery's rich cakes. He had a kettle on the stove and coffee boiling, and, all at once, I, too, had to admit that this was the baby coming.

"Hang on!" he commanded, himself hanging on to strategic parts of my body. "Hang on—but heave away! Remember, it's something like pulling braces!"

While I heaved with a most pleasant sensation of power I jubilated inwardly that Sven was in command. The room rocked a bit, too, very gently, just to hint that we might be afloat. With one long pang, which seemed to vibrate away into Sven's bare arms, the muscles clenched for me to clutch, I heaved in concord with the surge of the tide within, and at last felt the whole bigness and delightfulness slithering out of my body.

Panting exclamations announced the presence of Irene Lindqvist, arrived just in time to clear up the mess.

In the *stuga* I heard someone saying, aghast,

"He couldn't be expected to get there and back in under forty-five minutes!"

So. It really had been as quick as it seemed. I giggled silently as the third mate's doggerel floated up in my mind:

"Dat's te vay te kill te pik!"

Humbly amusing myself by being an eavesdropper on my own thoughts I waited until Sven and the *barnmorska* should become less busy and interested in the extra presence which was snuffling away on her lap; but they were both so excited that they put it away in the cradle without making us acquainted.

Sven only had to look at me to see that something was wrong.

"After all, it's my baby, too," I said, rather peevisly.

His whole face melted, and despite the *barnmorska's* protests he gathered up the bundle and brought it to me. We both peered at its face intently.

"A big fat squirrel!" I whispered. "Who would have guessed *that!*"

"Four kilos eight hundred grammes, *en riktig gosse!*" proclaimed Irene Lindqvist proudly, though she had had mighty little to do with it.

Though it was zero hour Pellas was wide awake. While Irene Lindqvist was regaled with coffee and some of the "*sexton sorter*" which had survived from the Christmas baking, Ebba brought me that ceremonial drink, pinked out on a tray. The starched, embroidered cloth, the porcelain cup, the glimmering silver spoon, the nucleus of sugar cubes, the tiny jug of cream, the variegated cluster of biscuits—though coffee was the last thing I wanted, for her sake, and the sake of the household gods, I drank it.

It was not easy for her to shuffle along and carry a tray, but she managed to do it with quite an air, and to fill my cup steadily from the gleaming copper kettle—dear brave Ebba, who loved babies.

While I drank, she dragged herself over to the cradle and took a long, thirsty look. Her lips were pursed and smiling when she came back to the bed.

"Nå, Pamie," she said, "it went quickly for you, my girl!"

You would have thought that Ebba had had a dozen babies.

In a little while Pellas returned to rest. Irene Lindqvist was disposed of in Ebba's room, the lamps were extinguished, and Sven lay down on the sofa in the *stuga*. It was the sofa we had made on that last voyage. I heard him sigh as he fell asleep. He had looked very tired when he had tried to brush the hair out of my eyes and pin it back.

Österkammaren, where I lay, was a small room, with two double windows, and now through these the moonbeams flooded in tangled reflections, filling every corner and banishing every shadow. On such a night, when moonlight drenched the decks, *Förste* used to say,

"You might almost expect to meet Her—walking!"

Her—the Duchess—*Herzogin Cecilie*.

The very thought of the sound of her name set my blood tingling. Its lovely diapason had always stirred my spirit: and now, lying there with a mind clear as never before—so crystal clear that it could almost reflect some hint of the ultimate reality—I savoured the name over and over again.—*Herzogin Cecilie—Herzogin Cecilie—*

Sad that this son of ours would never know her though she had harboured him from the first pinpoint of his existence, for five months of those nine allotted to his perfecting.

I tried to count back and determine the latitude and longitude of his conception, playing with the idea that he would be boisterous and blustery like the westerlies: for in the westerlies it would be, approaching the maw of the Channel.

What a vision of beauty she had been in her new paint, decked out for Europe, forging majestically into the eye of the rising sun—it was on that morning that *Förste* had told his dream and I had told Sven's, grouped there on the deck in the early morning sun, casually laughing at such oddities. No hint of doom, so blind were we to poor Cecilie's warnings.

Poor Cecilie—somehow it had the wrong sound. The re-

splendent entity which had suffused the body of the ship could never be pitied as "poor".

Could it be that the ship had really been possessed by some primitive passionate spirit seeking material form?—there was Sven, in the toils of love for her but wanting me as a wife—there was I, in the toils of love for Sven, and for her, too.

Perhaps she grew tired of the great thundering sails, the massive spars, the humming ropes; perhaps she sickened of the endless ranks of ocean, the set horizon, the cavortings of the porpoise and the whale; perhaps she no longer found balm in adoration, adulation, fascination, the enslavement of whom she could. In plain words, perhaps she at last found that square-rig could not in the end compete with the female form divine.

My thoughts ravelled up into a fluorescent crystal ball which burst in a myriad flashes—leaving a small, bare truth revealed—as naked as a new-born babe.

I must have cried out aloud, "Cecilie!" for suddenly Sven was bending over me.

"Pamie, what is it? Do you want anything. Are you thirsty?"

"No, no—only something marvellous."

He knelt down beside me and put an arm under the pillow.

"Tell me," he said. "You cried out 'Cecilie!' Don't think of sad things, Pamie."

"Sad things! No—they're wonderful things!"

"What are they, then?"

"I've found a name for the squirrel."

"What?"

"Sven-Cecilie."

There was a pause.

"It's a funny sort of name for a boy, Pamie."

"He's a funny sort of boy," I whispered, "because he's a boy with three parents!"

Appendix

UNFORTUNATELY, the log book in which *Herzogin Cecilie's* stranding is recorded has been lost. Its place is in the Åland Nautical Museum, but it is not there; neither is it in Mr. Edgar Erikson's office in Mariehamn. For want of this ultimate authority I give what W. L. A. Derby has to say about the stranding in his *The Tall Ships Pass*.

This book, almost completed before April 1936, was published by Jonathan Cape in 1937. Half of it is devoted to *Herzogin*. It contains a minute description of her, for the use of scale-model builders, and an authoritative biography, assembling all the facts about her life and fortunes during her German and Finnish days. There are a few inaccuracies, such as her last passage from Copenhagen to Port Lincoln, which was 79, not 83 days. It is magnificently and profusely illustrated with photographs, mostly of her, taken by another devotee, Mr. A. S. Herring. Both Herring and Derby were London business men, who were only able to experience the short North Sea and Baltic passages when she sailed from England to her home waters.

'The causes contributing to the loss of *Herzogin Cecilie* are somewhat obscure. Why should a well-found barque, in capable hands, deviate so far from her intended course that, after logging less than fifty miles, she found herself in dire distress almost ten miles to the north of her calculated position? Such a happening would seem to be attributable only to some undiscovered error in navigation, or to one of those inexplicable strokes of ill-fortune which are among the many hazards of the sea. In his

deposition to the Receiver of Wreck, the Master gave his opinion of the cause of the loss: he thought it was due to a combination of fog and possible magnetic attraction, plus the presence of sufficient tidal impulse to set the vessel right off her course.

'Having received her orders to proceed from Falmouth to Ipswich, where the grain would be discharged, *Herzogin Cecilie* got under way at 8.20 p.m. on Friday, 24 April. Since the previous day she had been lying in Falmouth Bay, outside the spacious harbour, and about a mile and a half south-west of St. Anthony's Head.

'A south-west breeze, force 2-3, was blowing, and there was a moderate sea, misty weather, and patches of light fog. She stood out to sea on the starboard tack, setting a course which was given in the master's deposition as S. 24° E. (true), and passing a few miles to the east of the dreaded Manacles rocks, near Lizard Head. By 10.40 p.m. she had sailed 12 miles on this tack.

'The following alterations of course are said to have been made during the night. The true courses are given, together with the estimated distance sailed on each course.

10.40 p.m.	Course altered to S. 35½° E.	then sailed 2½ miles
11.10 p.m.	„ „ S. 46½° E.	„ 2 miles
11.30 p.m.	„ „ N. 74° E.	„ 17½ miles
2 a.m.	„ „ N. 79° E.	„ 10 miles
3.30 a.m.	„ „ N. 83° E.	„ 5 miles

'At 3.50 a.m. the barque struck the Ham Stone Rock.

'By 11 p.m. although the wind had not varied, the haze had thickened, and half an hour later, the fog was sufficiently dense to necessitate the use of fog signals. At that time the barque was running free before a light WSW. wind. By 2 a.m., when she was hauled out a further 5°, *Herzogin Cecilie* was said to be sailing at a speed of seven knots in thick fog.

'If the above courses are plotted on a chart it will be found that those in charge of the barque intended that, before she turned through a considerable angle to head E. by N. up-Channel, she

should be in a position, after allowing for tidal set and leeway, to pass many miles south of any landfall hazard that lay before her.

'Save that her Master had, apparently, hauled her out a further 5° and then, as the fog thickened, another 4° , *Herzogin Cecilie* held to her new direction for five and a half hours. Then, just before 4 a.m. she went ashore at a spot which was many miles off her destined course.

'The total distance sailed through the water, according to the above estimate, was 49 miles in $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours, giving a mean sailing speed of $6\frac{1}{2}$ knots.

'The direct route between St. Anthony's Head and Sewer Mill Cove (between Bolt Head and Bolt Tail, where she stranded) is 46 miles, passing, some 30 miles from the former point, just north of the Eddystone. It was expected that this warning would be seen or heard about two in the morning. Eddystone Light is a group light, consisting of two flashes every 30 seconds, having a field of visibility of 17 miles radius in clear weather. It also also shows a fixed, white, lower light, visible for fifteen miles, and is fitted with a fog-explosive warning. No indication of its presence, however, was recorded by those on board *Herzogin Cecilie* as she sailed onwards unknowingly to her doom. Fog signals are notoriously inconsistent in their receptive range, and it is conceivable that the barque passed through a 'dead' area for reception, even, perhaps, relatively near to the lighthouse.

'The next important warning to vessels bound up-Channel is at Start Point, just eastward of Prawle Point, and 24 miles from Eddystone. On a clear night the white flash (every twenty seconds of the Start Light is visible 20 miles away, and the lighthouse is equipped with a powerful fog-siren.

'Following, on the chart, the events of that foggy spring night, it will be seen that *Herzogin Cecilie* should have passed many miles to seaward of Start Point, instead of which, at 3.50 a.m., the Mate saw a dark mass loom out of the fog on the port side of the barque. The Master was informed, and the helm put hard-a-starboard in an effort to clear the obstruction. At the same time

the starboard braces were let run, but, almost immediately, *Herzogin Cecilie* crashed into the Ham Stone, holing herself in the forehold and pump room and flooding three compartments. The force of the impact, aided by sea and wind, swung her clear of the rocks: both anchors were let go, but they found no holding ground and she slewed round broadside-on to the precipitous cliffs, a thousand yards a-lee.

'The heavy swell carried her inshore, to ground at the mouth of Sewer Mill Cove. She came in stern first, but on striking rock near her stern, swung broadside on again, and remained fast 50 yards or so from the base of the 300-foot cliff which forms the west face of Bolt Head.

' In regard to the possible causes which can be advanced in respect of the casualty, one, fog, has already been detailed. The question of the action of the tides on the course of the barque is interesting. According to the tide-tables, she had, until about 10.30 p.m. a favourable tide running under her in a direction, roughly, north-east. This tide would tend to set her in towards the Eddystone, but, in the two hours before the tide turned against her, under normal conditions the barque should not have been set more than three miles in a north-easterly direction. An hour after the tide had turned came the change of course which took *Herzogin Cecilie*, ostensibly, up-Channel, and well clear of all danger. From this point, on her proper course, she should have had the tide slightly on the starboard bow, tending again to set her in towards the land, but now to a far lesser degree. On the other hand, the nearer she drew towards Bolt Head, the more the tide, following, as it would do, the bight of the land, tended to divert her towards the north-west, and, consequently, off her course, and towards the coast.

'*Herzogin Cecilie* stranded some five hours before high water, four days before neap tides, and at a period when the rise and fall (on Salcombe Bar) was about 17 feet.

'It has been stated that compass trouble was experienced during the later stages of the homeward passage from Australia. The

theory, which was advanced, subsequently, by local opinion, that *Herzogin Cecilie's* compasses were affected by the magnetic properties attributed to the ironstone promontory of Bolt Head is, however, hardly tenable. Her compasses had been checked at frequent intervals, and, only two days earlier, a compass deviation of 1° E. had been ascertained over an easterly course. The needles did, it was said, oscillate violently just before she hit the Ham Stone, but, to bring her so far inside Start Point she must, of necessity, have been holding a false course for some considerable time. In other words, the suggested magnetic influence, of which no mention is made in Admiralty publications, must have exerted its baleful effect at what was, surely, an incredible distance seaward.

'It so happened that though Captain Sven Eriksson had sailed out of Falmouth Bay on five previous occasions, only once had he travelled to the eastward. This was in 1933, when, under orders for London, she was reported off Prawle on the first day out of Falmouth, and docked three days later at Millwall.'